the folk, roots and world music magazine

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NELL ROBINSON ...UTTERLY WON ME OVER CHARMED ME SILLY" MAGAZINE

penguin eggs

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album Penguin Eggs — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for many young, gifted performers.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes Penguin Eggs such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones's Penguin Eggs is available through Topic Records.

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editorial

Throughout September The Independent newspaper in the U.K. ran an extraordinary series of features investigating "honour killings" — a repulsive reference to women murdered by their own families in accordance to a deprayed tradition that dates back hundreds of years. The figures are staggering.

An estimated 20,000 women are slaughtered each year and organizations such as Amnesty International say the numbers are increasing. While largely a Muslim practice, Christian and Hindus adhere to the same vile principle that puts the "honour" of families, communities and tribes before human mercy. The vast and detailed catalogue of these crimes highlighted by *The Independent* makes for difficult reading.

"How should one react to a man ... who rapes his own daughter and then, when she becomes pregnant, kills her to save the "honour" of his family?" writes Robert Fisk. Most of these murders take place in the Middle East—largely in a corridor of countries that stretches from Turkey to Pakistan. And yet "honour killings" long ago spread to the likes of Belgium, Britain, Canada...

Actually, they've been around our European ancestors for centuries with the graphic cruelty documented in numerous folk songs. Take a good listen to The Cruel Brother, Lizie Wan, Bonnie Susie Cleland, Andrew Lammie, Sheath And Knife and Matty Groves, for example.

The explicit crimes committed against women in these ballads are horrendous. As information about "honour killings" grows more prolific, and outrage more specific, singers of such traditional material will inevitably require some serious soul-searching. To ignore the likes of Ludy Maisry, in which a Scottish family burn their daughter at the stake for falling in love with an English lord, of course, is the path of least resistance. But there are lessons to be learned from these songs, cautionary tales that vividly illustrate the demented arrogance of absolute power and privilege.

The divine right of kings still exists. Dictatorships abound. Democracy, for all of its inevitable charm, still remains in its infancy. Moreover, as with many examples of folklore, these songs serve as teaching tools, providing, if nothing else, such elementary lessons as a woman's wits are her only sure source of survival. At the very least, traditional singers ought to consider contemporary introductions to these big ballads. Anything less seems a callous disregard for the heimous circumstances that threaten to render these songs taboo.

By Roddy Campbell

cover feature

38 . . . A pensive character, that Ray LaMontange. And a unique artist in every aspect—singing, songwriting and, indeed, philosophy. Colin Irwin considers LaMontagne's latest release, God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise, extraordinarily good.

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quotable

"I suggest you get to know schmaltz and corn the theatricality of music—that's what I grew up with as a kid, playing dances." — Garth Hudson

"Addiction ... you never really recover. It's insidious and you just slide into it. It's not a conscious decision. I didn't get out of bed one morning and say, 'Hmmm, I must become a cocaine addict for awhile.' You just turn around one day and you're selling everything you own to buy drugs."

- Ron Hynes

"I keep getting calls from agents and labels wanting information. They want me to do up a spreadsheet of the gigs I've played, so that they can look at where my 'markets' are. The thing is, half these gigs were terrible, where I barely got paid or nobody was there.

— Del Barber

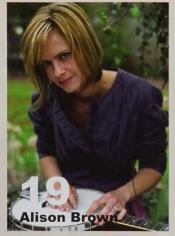
sheet music

61... Open Pit Mine.

- Arranged by By Ball & Chain

65... Two traditional Quebec fiddle tunes: La Feé des Dents and Reel de Pointe-au-Pie – Arranged by Pascal Gemme









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lynn miles' top 10

The Band Music From The Big Pink (Capitol)

Tracy Chapman

Bob Dylan

Highway 61 Revisited (Colu

Bob Dylan

Woody Guthrie
This land IS Your land (Smithrenian Enthronian

The Louvin Brothers

When I Stop Dreaming (Razor & Tie)

Joni Mitchell Blue (Reprise)

Joni Mitchell

Jimmie Rodgers
The Very Best of Jimmie Rodgers (Sony/BMG Intl.)

Neil Young Harvest (Reprise)

Lynn Miles's latest record, Fall For Beauty, is on True North Record See the Penguin Eggs feature on Lynn on page 23.



fred's records top 5

- 1. Amelia Curran
- 2. The Once
- 3. Great Big Sea
 Sofe Upon The Shore (WEA)
- 4. Ron Hynes
 Stealing Genius (Borealis
- 5. Navigators
 Seg Miner (Independent

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 1G5



sillions top 10

- Gilles Vigneault
 Retrouvailles (Disques Tempéte)
- 2. Leonard Cohen
 Songs For The Road (Colum
- 3. Martha Wainwright
 Sons fusils, ni souliers, à Poris (Repuiblic of Music
- 4. Fred Pellerin
- 5. Gilles Vigneault
- 6. Zaz
- 7. Various Artists
 | était une fois... La Boîte à Chansons (Independent)
- 3. Elisapie Isaac
- There Will Be Stars (Pheromone)
- Crazy Heart (New West Records)
- 10. Anaïs Mitchell
 Hadestown (Righteous Babe Records)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Sillons, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Quebec, QC, G1R 2S9.

groundfloor music top 10

- 1. Ray Lamontagne
 God Willin' And The Creek Don't Rise (Red Ink)
- 2. Sarah Harmer Oh Little Fire (Cold Snap)
- 3. Bob Dylan
 The Witmark Demos: 1962-1964 (Columbia)
- 4. Royal Wood
 The Waiting (MapleMusic)
- 5. Mavis Staples
 You Are Not Alone (Anti)
 - James Taylor & Carole King Live At The Troubadour (Hear)
- 7. Cyndi Lauper
 Memphis Blues (Downtown
- 8. Amelia Curran Hunter Hunter (WEA)
- 9. Jimmy Vaughan
 Jimmy Vaughan Plays Blues, Ballads & Favorites (Shout Factory
- 10. Richard Laviolette and the Oil Spills
 All Of Your Row Materials (Outside)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Groundfloor Music, 13 Quebec Street, Gueloh, Ontario, N1H 2T

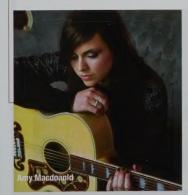
highlife top 10

- 1. Neil Young
 Le Noise (Reprise)
- 2. Frazey Ford
- 3. Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings
 | Learned The Hord Way (Daptone)
- 4. Lee Fields
 My World (Do Right
- 5. Kottarashky
- 6. Arcade Fire
- 7. Robert Plant
 Band Of Joy (Rounder)
- 8. Youssou N'dour
 Dakar-Kingston (Universal)
- 9. Ray Lamontagne
- 10. Ali Farka Toure & Toumani Diabate
 Ali & Toumani (World Circuit/Nonesuch)
 - Based on album sales for August, September and October at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, VSL 3X5

amazon uk top 5

- 1. Laura Marling
 | Speak Because | Con (Virgin)
- 2. Bellowhead
 Hedonism (Navigator Records)
- 3. Robert Plant, Alison Krauss
 Raising Sand (Rounder)
- 4. Kate Rusby
 MAKE THE LIGHT (Pure Records)
- 5. Amy Macdonald
 A Curious Thing (Mercury)

Based on world and folk album sales at Amazon US – www.amazor com/Folk-Music/





ten years ago

- 1. Leonard Cohen
 Ten New Songs (Cotumbia)
- 2. Ryan Adams
- 3. Bob Dylan
- Love and Theft (Col
- New American Language (Messenger)

 5. Afro-Celt Sound System
- 6. Alpha Yay Diallo
 The Journey (Jericho Beach Music)
- 7. Boozoo Bajou
- 8. Matapat
 Petit Fou (Borealis)
- 9. Harry Manx
 Dog My Cat (Northern Blue
- 10. Various Artists
 0' Brother Where Art Thou? (Mercup

Based on the folk, roots and world music charts featured in Penguin Eggs, Autumn issue, No. 12, 2001.

soundscapes top 10

- 1. Neil Young
- 2. Martha Wainwright
- 3. Sarah Harmer Oh Little Fire (Cold Snap)
- 4. Mavis Staples
 You Are Not Alone (Anti
- 5. Forest City Lovers
- 6. Sadies
- 7. Robert Plant
- Band Of Joy (Rounder)
- 8. Isobel Campbell & Mark Lanegan Howk (Vanguard)

 9. Various Artists
- 9. Various Artists
 Califia: Songs Of Lee Hazlewood (Acce
- 10. Pete Molinari A Train Bound For Glory (Universal)

Based on album sales for August, September and October at Soundscapes, 572 College St., Toronto, On, M6G 1B3.

ckua top 20

- 1. Jeremy Fisher
 Flood (Aquarius)

 2. Robert Plant
 Band of Joy (Rounder)
- 3. Jim Byrnes
 Everywhere West (Black Hen)
- 4. Neil Young
- 5. Luke Doucet and the White Falcon
 Steel City Trowler (Six Shooter)
 - 6. Los Lobos
 Tin Can Trust (Shout Factory)
- 7. Kat Danser
 Passin`-A-Time (Independent
- 8. Mavis Staples
- You Are Not Alone (Anti)

 9. J. R. Shore
- 10. Sarah Harmer
 Oh Little Fire (Cold Snap)
- 11. Danny Michel
 Sunset Seg (Independent)
- 12. Carrie Day Immaculate Night (Independent)
- 13. Michael Franti & Spearhead
 The Sound of Sunshine (Capital)
- 14. Jayme Stone
 Room Of Wonders (Jayme Stone)
- 15. The Once
 The Once (Borcalis)
- 16. Alejandro Escovedo Street Songs Of Love (Fantasy)
- 17. Ray Lamontagne & The Pariah Dogs
 God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise (Reprise)
- 18. Richard Thompson
 Dream Attic (Shout Factory)
- 19. Jimmy Vaughan
 Jimmy Vaughan Plays Blues, Ballads & Favorites (Shout Factory)
- 20. Eric Clapton (lapton (Reprise)

Based on the most-played folk, roots and world music dics on cikus radio – www.ckus.org throughout August, September and October.



News-Gossip-Rumour-Tattle

In a surprise move, described by the Ottawa Citizen as a "friendly takeover". the Ottawa Bluesfest will invest almost \$350,000 in the cash-strapped Ottawa Folk Festival. After several meetings, which concluded Nov. 10, Bluesfest executive and artistic director Mark Monahan promised to pay off the folk festival's current accumulated debt, estimated at \$150,000, and to double an artistic budget that currently sits between \$150,000 and \$200,000. Monahan also said that four directors involved with the Bluesfest will now sit on the folk festival board. The quartet will include Paul Symes, owner of the noted Wakefield, OC, venue the Blacksheep Inn. Three members from the old administration will complete the board.

"I prefer to call it a partnership rather than a takeover," said folk festival board member Bob Ledrew. "If Bluesfest wanted a second summer festival they could have crushed us. It's counterproductive to talk of sides—bluesfest and folkfest. They've provide us with seed money and that's a good way of looking at it."

A decision to relocate from the festival's current site in Britannia Park appears "probable," said Ledrew. Monahan said the existing location is too remote and too difficult to reach by public transit.

The folk festival, founded in 1994, has struggled almost every year since 2004. Concerns accelerated in October 2009. The board of directors held different views from

artistic director **Chris White** on how to take the festival forward. And White resigned after 16 years booking the event. He was replaced by **Dylan Griffith** last January on a one-year contract. Poor 2010 advance ticket sales (400 weekend passes sold) and torrential rain on the Sunday meant no financial relief.

"There are no plans for staff layoffs," said , Ledrew. "Mark will act as a consultant, but will not book the folk festival."

"The debt was hampering them to the point where they couldn't make good decisions," Monahan told the *Citizen*.

"You have to be able to invest in talent. This will be good for both festivals and two great festivals will be good for the community."

The Bluesfest likens itself to a Canadian version of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. The 12-day, multi-staged event attracts an audience of about 300,000 to hear up to 185 acts. And the music presented covers all genres from country pop to Tuvan throat singers.

"After a couple of years of chaos, new governance and just plain bad luck, I'm excited to see a solid footing under the 16-year-old festival," says Arthur McGregor, owner of the Ottawa Folklore Centre and founding sponsor of the folk festival. "Mark Monahan sails a tight ship and keeps good people around him. I'm looking forward to a great future for our folk festival."

000

After 20 years as artistic director of the Canmore Folk Music Festival, **Ken Rooks**, 68, resigned Oct. 18. "It was just getting time," says Rooks. "It was my choice. I wanted to do less and less and still be involved. But you have to be fully committed. You can't do it halfway."

Canmore began in 1978 as a one-day event that used a flatbed truck as a stage. It now runs over four days in the town's centrally located Centennial Park and attracts an estimated audience of 14,000.

Since its inception, the festival has donated more than \$140,000 to local outreach programs and community development. It has also amassed a \$500,000 rainy-day fund and a sizeable reputation as a quality event.

Sue Panning, Rooks's assistant for the past few years, will take over as the artistic director. Rooks intends to travel more throughout his retirement.

"After 25 years [five as a volunteer] it's pretty hard to give up. I have always felt I wanted to contribute something to society and I feel the festival contributed to Canmore's art community and contributed over \$2,000,000 to Canmore's economy each year," says Rooks. "It became a real passion with me over the years with much satisfaction introducing many performers to Canmore—a small, rural Alberta community—who would never perform in this area without the festival."

Rooks received Alberta's Provincial





Centennial Medal in 2005 and the Town of Canmore's Legacy Building in the Arts Award for his work with the folk festival.

000

Alex Cuba and Nelly Furtado each won a Latin Grammy at the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas on Nov. 11. It's the first time in the award show's 10-year history that any Canadian has taken home one of its prizes.

The Cuban-born, Smithers, BC-based, two-time Juno winner, Cuba, won for Best New Artist and was nominated for Best Male Pop Vocal Album. He also served as a presenter at the ceremony and co-wrote seven songs on Furtado's album *Mi Plan*, which earned her Best Female Pop Album.

Cuba won his Juno Awards for World Music Album of the Year: in 2006 for Humo De Tabaco and in 2008 for Agua Del Pozo.

000

The prominent exponent of the Highland bagpipes resides in a Vancouver suburb.

Jack Lee, from Surrey, BC, won the Clasp for Piobaireachd—the instrument's top prize—at the Northern Meeting in Inverness, Scotland, in early September. Pibroch or Ceòl Mór (Scottish Gaelic meaning the great music) is considered somewhat of a classical form of piping well-established by about 1750. Most of its tunes date from that time period or earlier.

"Only those who've already won a gold medal at the annual meeting are allowed to compete, so it's a kind of champion of champions award," says Lee, who's been pipe sergeant for the past 30 years with the former world champion **Simon Fraser University Pipe Band**. "Pibrochs [the airs] are very demanding. They always have a

melody line, a theme followed by increasingly complex variations that become extraordinarily difficult at the end, when your fingers are flying all over the place."

The contest for the Clasp goes back more than 200 years, and Lee also took top honours in 1994.

0 0 0

Irrepressible graphic artist Michael 'A Man Called' Wrycraft has accepted an invitation from McMaster University in Hamilton, ON, to archive his music-based design work and photography in their Mills Memorial Library. This includes physical samples and digital art for more than 430 album designs, hundreds of assorted poster and promotional items as well as notebooks, sketches and alternative, unchosen versions of all designs.

The Juno Award-winning designer is widely known for his colourful folk and roots album covers for the likes of **Bruce Cockburn** and **Gordon Lightfoot.**

In 2008, Wrycraft's first album design for Cockburn (*Breakfast In New Orleans Dinner in Timbuktu*) spent a year in New York's Museum of Modern Art. He is currently working on his seventh Cockburn album, *Small Source of Comfort*.

McMaster, which has one of the finest and largest archives in the country, currently houses the extensive works of Cockburn, Farley Mowat, Bertrand Russell and Margaret Laurence, to name but a few.

000

The North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance will return to Canada in 2013—eight years after it held its last event in Montreal, QC, in 2005. The non-profit organization, which hosts the largest business conference and showcase for folk

music in the world, spent Oct. 13 and 14 inspecting various downtown hotels in Toronto. A formal announcement is expected before the end of the year.

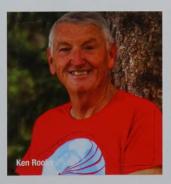


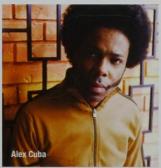
The Ontario Council of Folk Music Festivals annual conference is also on the move. After three years anchored in the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Ottawa, its 25th anniversary, 2011 event will be held at the Sheraton Fallsview Hotel in Niagara Falls, ON, from Oct. 13-16.

"The move from Ottawa coincides with a major anniversary," says OCFF executive director **Peter MacDonald**. "Niagara Falls decreases the travel burden on many delegates coming from the Greater Toronto Area, southern Ontario and the U.S.A. It's a fun-loving city where delegates [can] enjoy one of the wonders of the world."

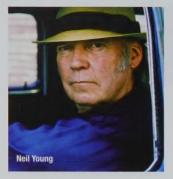
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FolkwaysAlive!, the University of Alberta's partnership with Smithsonian Folkways Recordings in Washington, DC, and broadcaster Peter North present the Second Annual Winter Roots and Blues Roundup—a combination of concerts and lectures - which take place Feb. 24-26 at various venues around Edmonton, AB. Participants include Rosalie Sorrels, Maria Dunn, Kat Danser, Lizzy Hoyt, Freebo, John Rutherford, and Grampa Banana a.k.a. Lowell Levinger, a founding member of the '60s roots-rock band The Youngbloods. He is also one of the foremost collectors and dealers of vintage stringed instruments in North America. There will also be a film component to this year's event, as well as seminars on vintage instruments and social and political activism in music.









"The event will be tight and tidy and hopefully as educational and enlightening as it will be entertaining," says Peter North, who will co-produce the event. More acts will be announced in December. For further information, go to fwalive.ualberta.ca/

000

Tom Landa, leader and guitarist of roots rockers Los Paperboys, is starting up a weekly musical series at the Cellar Jazz Club, 3611 West Broadway Street, Vancouver, on the last Wednesday of each month. Landa will front the Starbirds—a trio formed by himself, fiddler Kalissa Hernandez, and trombonist and bassist Nick La Riviere—and host A Night of Story and Song, which will include selected roots musicians from the Vancouver area.

000

The Winnipeg Folk Music Festival, in partnership with Manitoba Music, will host an open mic at the Folk Exchange, Winnipeg (behind the festival's music store) at 211 Bannatyne, Winnipeg. Non-players will be charged a \$2 cover. Dates include: Dec.17, Jan, 21, Feb. 18, March 18, April 15 and May 20.

Leon Redbone will receive the Winnipeg Folk Music Festival's Artistic Award at its Winter Wassail fundraiser, Dec. 2. at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. Redbone will be presented with a work of art by a Manitoba artist along with a cash award of \$10,000.

000

The new single from Same Latitude
As Rome marks the 125th anniversary
of the hanging of Louis Riel for treason.
A founder of Manitoba, and leader of the
Métis, Riel led two resistance movements
against the Canadian government and its

first post-Confederation prime minister, **Sir John A. Macdonald**.

"The unmerciful treatment of Louis Riel in 1885 by the government and court system of the day seems an incredible injustice by modern standards," says the band's **Peter Boyer**. "I was truly inspired by the need to tell this important story in a way that might help to make it known to more Canadians!"

A Song For Louis Riel is available as a free download on the band's website, www. samelatitudeasrome.com, along with a chart of the chords.

000

Noted Canadian luthier Jean Larrivee, whose instruments are played by the likes of John Sebastian and John Hiatt, donated four guitars to the Mariposa Folk Festival. They were subsequently autographed by performers at last summer's 50th anniversary event. Three will be used for fundraising and the fourth guitar went to the permanent collection of Mariposa Folk Foundation memorabilia at York University. Those signing the guitars include Gordon Lightfoot and Ian and Sylvia Tyson. For more information, go to www.mariposafolk.com

000

Emily Mitchell, mother of Taylor Mitchell—the young Canadian songwriter who died tragically Oct. 28, 2009, from a coyote attack while hiking in Cape Breton—has established the Taylor Mitchell Legacy

Trust in partnership with the **David Suzuki** Foundation.

The Legacy Trust funds will go towards an annual youth bursary administered by the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals for young, aspiring musicians. It will also help finance a number of community outreach programs focused on nature and musical development.

"Donating to the Taylor Mitchell Legacy Trust or to the David Suzuki Foundation are ways that we together can remember Taylor and to help make a difference in a way she would be thrilled about," said Emily.

Taylor Mitchell's debut album, For Your Consideration, earned a Canadian Folk Music Award nomination in the Young Performer of the Year category.

Donations can made online at http://www.davidsuzuki.org/taylormitchell.

000

A vintage 1959 Lincoln Continental belonging to **Neil Young** sparked a fire Nov. 9 in a San Francisco warehouse where he stored much of his memorabilia. Young had converted the car, dubbed the Lincvolt, into a hybrid vehicle which ran on batteries and a biodiesel-powered generator. While fire crews saved about 70 per cent of the building's contents, including other vintage cars, guitars and framed photos, the blaze destroyed an estimated \$850,000 US worth of Young's possessions and caused \$250,000 US in damage to the building.

000

I am a DJ-I am what I play

When I was 16 I found out you could go to college and learn how to be a DJ. I couldn't believe it. So off I went. I have been in professional radio since I was 18 years old and the reason is still the same —I love music and turning people on to tunes.

I did marketing and promotion for Sony, A&M and Virgin Records for a decade, but went back to radio in 2000 to host *Wide Cut Country* at CKUA (Sat., 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. MST at www.ckua.org).

In 2008 Mix 97.7 was launched in Calgary. My show, *Night Mix*, plays folk music—yes, commercial radio playing *folk music!*—lots of local and indie music alongside the greats. Thirty years later, I'm



still spinning tunes and loving it!

Allison Brock can be heard on Night
Mix on 97.7 FM Calgary or on the Internet
at www.mix977.com seven days a week,
from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. MST.

The Canadian Folk Music Awards 2010

The sixth annual Canadian Folk Music Awards took place at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre in Winnipeg, Nov 20. And despite the frigid weather outside, hosts Shelagh Rogers and Benoit Bourque brought an unflagging warmth to folk music's annual big night out. The four-hour, bilingual event included live performances from The Once, Don Ross, Heather Bishop, Stephen Fearing, Madagascar Slim, David Essig, Annabelle Chyostek and Shearwater Bluegrass Band.

Mutiple winners included The Once and Beyond The Pale, both of whom picked up two awards each. The complete list of recipients include: Traditional Album Of The Year, The Once - The Once; Contemporary Album Of The Year, John Wort Hannam - Queen's Hotel; Children's Album Of The Year, Andrew Queen - Too Tall; Traditional Singer Of The Year, Yves Lambert - Bal À L'huile; Contemporary Singer Of The Year, Rose Cousins - The Send Off; Instrumental Solo Artist Of The Year, Wendell Ferguson - Ménage A Moi; Instrumental Group Of The Year, Beyond the Pale - Postcards; Vocal Group Of The Year, Dala - Girls From The North County; Ensemble Of The Year, Le Vent Du Nord - La Part Du Feu; Solo Artist Of The Year, Amelia Curran - Hunter. Hunter, English Songwriter Of The Year; Ian Tamblyn - Gyre; French Songwriter Of The Year; Francis D'octobre - Ma Bête Fragile; Aboriginal Songwriter Of The Year, Asani - Listen: World Artist Of The Year (Solo), Dominic Mancuso - Comfortably Mine; World Artist Of The Year (Group); Sokoun Trio, Zanneh; Emerging Artist Of The Year, The Once - The Once; Producer Of The Year, Steve Dawson - Things About Comin' My Way (Various Artists); Pushing The Boundaries, Beyond The Pale - Postcards; Young Performer Of The Year, Alexandre Boivin-Caron - La Tradition. Ian Tyson received the Resonance Award from the Canadian Museum of Civilization for a lifetime's contribution to Canadian music.

All photos by CFMA volunteer Thom Fountain. Clockwise from top: Rose Cousins, Geraldine Hollett (The Once), Beyond The Pale (live at the CFMA Showcase), Alexandre Boivin-Caron, the finale – Shearwater Bluegrass with Grit Laskin (far right), David Boulanger (third from right) and Benoit Bourque (far left), and David Essig.



STONY PLAIN RECORDS



DUKE ROBILLARD Passport to the Blues

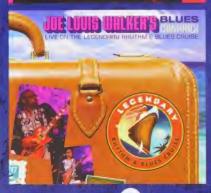
Duke is one of the most acclaimed modern blues artists with four 'Guitarist of The Year' and most recently 'Traditional Blues Artist Of The Year' awards. Following on the heels of Duke's Grammy nominated release, his latest has been described as "a stone return to Duke's grittiest roots — dirty, gutty, house-rockin', shack-shakin', finger-bustin', down-in-the-bottom git-tar blues" by Ted Drozdowski.



RONNIE EARL AND THE BROADCASTERS

Spread The Love

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Swansongs



Irwin Silber 1925-2010

Irwin Silber, a key figure in the American urban folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s, died in Oakland, CA, Sept 8. He was 84, writes Roddy Campbell.

Silber co-founded, with Pete Seeger and Alan Lomax, Sing Out!—the highly influential folk music magazine—and worked as its editor from 1950 to 1967. Under Silber's guidance Sing Out! published, for the first time, such celebrated songs as Sixteen Tons. This Land Is Your Land, Blowin' In The Wind, Bells of Rhymney and Cotton Fields.

Most notably he published an open letter to Bob Dylan in which Silber severely criticized Dylan for abondoning his political writing for more personal musings. Dylan responded by refusing to allow *Sing Out!* to publish any more of his songs.

Born in New York City on Oct. 17, 1925, Silber attended Brooklyn College and was active in the Young Communist League and American Youth for Democracy. As an ardent socialist, he found common cause with Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Lee Hays and others who regarded folk music as an empowering form of political protest. In 1946, they founded People's Songs Inc., which published a bulletin "to create, promote and distribute songs of labor and the American people."

People's Songs went bankrupt in 1949, having spent its meager funds on Henry Wallace's failed 1948 presidential campaign. But from the ashes arose Sing Out!

"For any of us writing about folk music—especially folk music intertwined with progressive politics—Irwin Silber was the perfect inspiration: doggedly outspoken and passionate, with a razor sharp editorial voice and agenda and a deep understanding of the people's music and how to keep it real," says Mark Moss, the current editor of Sing Out!

During the 1950s, Silber was summoned by the House of Un-American Activities Committee. He pleaded the first amendment—the right to freedom of speech. When asked by the committee what he had taught at a school that was well-known for its radical left-wing outlook, he truthfully replied "square dancing", after which the questioning ended. He left the Communist Party in the late 1950s.

Silber also compiled some of the most influential songbooks of the American folk revival. He was instrumental in establishing Oak Publications with Moses Asch, the owner of Folkways Records, with whom Sing Out! shared offices. In an eight-year period, they published more than 100 titles—including the songs of Seeger and Guthrie, African-American songs from Alabama, and instrumental instruction booklets—before selling their company in 1967.

From *Sing Out!* he joined New York's radical independent newspaper the *Guardian* and founded Paredon Records.

Solomon Burke 1940-2010

Soul pioneer Solomon Burke died of natural causes Oct. 10 at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, having just arrived from Los Angeles. He was 70, writes Roddy Campbell.

Known for such hits as Everybody Needs Somebody to Love and Cry to Me, his songs were covered by the likes of the Rolling



Stones and Wilson Pickett. Burke was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2001 and won best contemporary blues album at the Grammys in 2003 for *Don't Give Up On Me*.

Born in Philadelphia, Burke rose to prominence in the early '60s when he signed with Ahmet Ertegun's Atlantic Records. Burke's first hit record was a cover of the country song Just Out of Reach. His combination of country, blues. gospel and R&B produced a dozen hits by 1964, which led Rockin' Robin of radio station WEBB in Baltimore to dub Burke the King of Rock 'n' Soul. From that point on, he often wore a crown and robe on stage befitting his royal stature. A flamboyant showman to the end, he frequently gave away red roses or money during live performances. Sometimes he even married couples as he was an ordained minister as well as a licensed mortician. Famed R&B producer Jerry Wexler referred to him as the "best soul singer of all time."

In 1969 Burke moved to Bell Records and had a small hit with a version of Creedence Clearwater Revival's Proud Mary; but from the early 1970s onwards he concentrated on his ministry. In 2002, though, he made an unforeseen return to the charts with the superb album Don't Give Up On Me. Released by Fat Possum Records, it featured tracks written for him by admirers such as Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, Tom Waits, Brian Wilson and Elvis Costello, In 2006 Burke released Nashville. which included collaborations with Dolly Parton and Emmylou Harris. Two years later, he made Like a Fire, featuring songs especially composed for him by the likes of Eric Clapton, Ben Harper, Jesse Harris and Keb' Mo'

Burke married three times, fathered 21 children, and left an estimated 90 grandchildren..

Penguin Eggs also notes other passings in brief: Don Partridge, the self-styled King of British Buskers, has died aged 68. Partridge performed as a one-man band and had a brief period of fame in the late 1960s through his hit single Rosie. Reggae star Gregory Isaacs has died at the age of 59 at his London home following a long illness.

The Big Buzz



De Temps Antan

De Temps Antan started out as a small Quebecois roots band within a much bigger one.

Ace fiddler André Brunet and multi-instrumentalists Pierre-Luc Dupuis and Eric Beaudry first got together while playing and touring with La Bottine Souriante. The 10-piece monster with horns opened up vast new horizons for its three youngest musicians, but at the same time they missed playing the intimate venues they loved.

"The trio was born in 2004 after a request by a friend who does bookings for a room and wanted to hear the three of us together," says Dupuis, who sings and plays diatonic accordion, harmonica, and jaw harp. "It meant really bringing things down to basics, to the music's essence."

The punning name they chose is lost in translation. De Temps Antan means "from olden times", an allusion to the traditional music they play—but sounds exactly the same as the expression *de temps en temps*, "from time to time".

"It's because we were only able to perform every now and then, between commitments with La Bottine. We still managed to tour a bit and record an album, À L'Année. Since then, André and I have left La Bottine, but Eric remains."

Each member of the acoustic power trio writes tunes, but above all De Temps Antan plays folk music from the Lanaudier region where they live. They tour increasingly, showcased at October's WOMEX in Copenhagen, and have built a strong repu-

tation in Canada and the U.S. for creative flair and high-energy stage shows.

That spirit pervades De Temps Antan's brilliant second CD, the recently released *Les Habits de Papier*. "We all played in the same room and there was no artificial reverb," says Dupuis. "Everything was taken straight off the studio floor, bar a couple of minor overdubs. We wanted the textures of the recording to reflect who and what we are."

Powered by Brunet's swinging elbow, Beaudry's clogging feet, and Dupuis's punchy accordion, the music has great drive, although there are quieter moments, too, when the finesse of the musicians really shines through.

"In concert we're used to pushing the pedal right to the floor, but we also like playing slower pieces to balance things. We've tried doing that here."

De Temps Antan draws inspiration from U.S. folk traditions, and *Les Habits de Papier* contains elements of blues, old-time, Cajun and bluegrass skilfully woven into the sonic fabric. But the source and heart of its music lies in rural Quebec.

"A lot comes from our own families, and from the village of St. Côme where Eric was born. He's got many songs and tunes from there, and he inherited the work of someone in the village who collected back in the '60s. So you get a sense of the richness of just one little corner of the country. Our aim is to keep the essence of that music, but to have an open-minded attitude. In short, to let it live and breathe."

- By Tony Montague

Cynthia MacLeod

Cynthia MacLeod plays dozens of ceilidhs every summer around the picturesque north shore of Prince Edward Island. On a good night, scores of tourists and locals will pack into a renovated one-room school house in Brackley Beach to dance and clap along with her exuberant fiddle playing.

But in mid-July this past summer her audience numbers took a serious upswing. Almost one million Canadian viewers and more than three million in the U.S. caught her spirited Celtic music as she fiddled for a very exclusive beach party on the *Live with Regis and Kelly* TV show.

"It was completely unexpected," laughs MacLeod, 25. "The producers wanted a lively Island kitchen party—and that's what we do every night. It wasn't much of a stretch and we certainly didn't need any rehearsal."

The broadcast was an exciting moment for the award-winning fiddler from tiny Wheatley River in P.E.I. Her father, Barry, had a little TV experience years before, having step-danced on the *Don Messer Show* when he was a young boy.

While the potential North American exposure from the popular American morning chat show is fantastic, MacLeod is unfazed by it all.

"If something comes of it, that's awesome. But when I'm 70, it's just gonna be sweet to think Regis held my hand and sang to me on the beach."

The following week, MacLeod was back



to playing her twice-a-week ceilidhs at Brackley Beach. The busy musician racked up 120 gigs from the first of July till the end of September—that's making music while the sun shines.

"People come to P.E.I. to hear the music and see the Island culture. It's busy for all the musicians here, and it makes it easier for the rest of the year—you don't have to be knocking down doors for a gig through the winter."

The dynamic musician has emerged as one of the region's top young Celtic players. She's won a dozen P.E.I. music awards, performed across Canada, and as far afield as the 2005 World Expo in Aichi, Japan. So when the producers of Regis and Kelly came calling for a fiddle player, they knew exactly who they wanted.

MacLeod has been playing for the public since she was 13, when she was hired to play fiddle tunes at Avonlea Village in Cavendish for tourists.

"What a great job that was. I was still learning to play so I got a lot of practice on the job all day long. That was a huge help to me."

She played at community concerts and ceilidhs, building her technique and her vast book of tunes. MacLeod is clearly influenced by local fiddle hero Richard Wood as well as Natalie MacMaster and other great Cape Breton players.

This past summer, MacLeod released her fourth album, *Riddle*, a sparkling collection of tunes reflecting her maturing musical sensibilities. The fiddle sets move from trad Scottish and Irish tunes to an Acadian medley and even a tongue-in-cheek turn at Charlie Daniels's *The Devil Went Down To Georgia*.

MacLeod also paired up with Nova Scotia musician Dave Gunning for the beautiful co-write *Red Sky*. The song has inspired MacLeod to take some vocal training and work some singing into her own live shows.

It had been three years since MacLeod was last in the studio, as she searched for the perfect music for this anticipated project.

"I was more than ready to get back to recording," she says. "I wanted to put out something I loved and the album turned out exactly as I wanted."

- By Sandy MacDonald



Ball and Chain

Some chefs claim no matter how well you cook food influenced by Louisiana flavour, it simply can't be reproduced. John Currence puts it this way in *The Believer*: "Even if you rush the fresh-baked bread to a distant location and assemble a (po' boy) of the perfectly executed ingredients, it still suffers not being consumed in the familiar sensory surroundings of New Orleans, whether it's the sounds of the French Quarter, the smell of the river, or the sight of passing traffic on St. Charles Avenue that triggers the neuro-responses in you."

Currence calls this the difference between dining and eating, but the same question of authenticity is raised by Ottawa band Ball and Chain, who love New Orleans so much it's ridiculous they don't actually live there. Besides being deeply embedded in the Canadian capital's roots music scene, working in 10 local bands and projects between them, longtime couple Jody Benjamin and Michael Ball are house painters who, Ball says, "Spend all our money getting back to New Orleans as often as possible."

For them, the musical equivalent to dining over simply eating involves spending time with mentors like Appalachian fiddler and banjoist Dirk Powell, whose name proliferates their 2009 album, recorded down south, Louisiana Love Bug.

"Part of the reason for studying is to give some authenticity to what I do," Ball admits easily. He and Benjamin rode a Canada Council grant down to the States and decided to record with Powell, "There's a big long lineup to work with that guy," Ball says, and he and Benjamin still explode with excitement recalling the fact he agreed to work with them, which makes their 20-year-old cat meow with concern.

"Dirk had a line on some local players," says Ball, "And it was so gratifying to go in and do a country song with people who got it right away."

"It just doesn't come that easily with Ottawa players," Benjamin adds, not as an insult but testament. "It's just so integral to their everyday life down there. Music and dancing go together so seamlessly. It seems it's just how they live their lives, which keeps us coming back."

Back to Ball: "I don't know why, it just works." So much so, they were nominated for an outsiders award in the Gulf, which says a lot about them, and the place they love.

When they get home—they laugh when I tease them about being sad about it—they try and replicate their experiences, missionary style. They give Cajun dance lessons, and infuse the country music they play with as much New Orleans as possible, a synthesis of where they came from (Benjamin: Saskatchewan) and where they want to go. In other words, they aren't importing the bread so much as trying to make new recipes with what they have, and where, for the most part, they're stuck eating it.

"It's hard to reproduce. And that's not all you want to do, either," says Jody, the

The Big Buzz

singer of half the songs, especially the sad country ballads.

But after 15 years of playing together, on and off stage, their jovial honesty does them well. "Though sometimes he does give me that look," Benjamin laughs until Ball joi

- By Fish Griwkowsky

Colette Cheverie

Growing up in rural East Point, Prince Edward Island, Colette Cheverie found her musical inspiration in the living room of the old family home. Like many young people in Atlantic Canada, Colette was blessed with a musical family that passed along the love of traditional tunes.

"My parents didn't play but my grandfather and grand uncle played fiddle," recalls Cheverie, "And my grandparents had an old record player at their house with a couple of John Allan Cameron records. I'd always have my grandmother put those on when I was there—it was my first exposure to Cape Breton music."

Her love of Cape Breton music should come as no surprise. The little village of East Point looks directly across the Northumberland Straight into Inverness County, the highland heart of Celtic music in Canada.

Although PEI hasn't grabbed the attention of the Celtic world as has nearby Cape Breton, there is still a deeply rooted tradition in its red soil and green fields.

"It's particularly evident in the summer,"

says Cheverie, "When there are ceilidhs somewhere every night. And we have the college of piping that is a huge centre of Celtic music."

Last November, the soft-spoken Islander was named traditional singer of the year at the Canadian Folk Music Awards.

"That was an amazing night," says Cheverie, just turned 26 and now living in Charlottetown. "It was pretty exciting, and totally unexpected when they called my name. It was all very surreal."

It was a powerful recognition of her young career, particularly since she has released only one album, her 2008 debut Hours Before Dawn. That album was also named best roots/traditional album at the PEI Music Awards and nominated in the same category at the East Coast Music Awards.

Despite her minimal output, her singing is assured beyond her years, clear as crystal and rich with the nuance of traditional Celtic-influenced ballads. Those early John Allan Cameron records gave way to the Rankin Family, and their influence is all over her music.

Since those early John Allan Cameron records were released in the late 1960s, hundreds of Celtic-flavoured albums have come out of Atlantic Canada, many owing a debt to the late pioneer. So the challenge is finding tunes to interpret that are still fresh and captivating, says Cheverie.

"I try to find songs that aren't that well known, songs that I can connect with," she says. "I love to find a contemporary twist and re-expose people to that music."

Cheverie is a big fan of contemporary Irish musicians Karan Casey and John Doyle, singer Mary Black and the seminal work of Peggy Seeger.

She spends her rare spare time poking through the music library at UPEI for Scottish, Irish and old English ballads, much of it collected by Island folklorist John Cousins.

As the winter settles over PEI, Cheverie plans to hunker down to start work on her sophomore album, woodshedding songs with Halifax guitarist Seph Peters. In April, the pair will mount a 14-date Home Routes house concert tour of Western Canada.

"When I sing a song I'm really connected with, I just love the emotion. I get the same feeling when I sing as when I hear someone playing the bagpipes, a sound that grabs you in the pit of your stomach."

- By Sandy MacDonald

Ron Casat

It's a sub-arctic November night.

Ron Casat is on the sidewalk in front of his S.E. Calgary condo, gamely brushing the inch or so of freshly fallen snow from the front stoop with what appears to be a well-used kitchen broom.

It's not what most people would consider a remarkable scene or even one worthy of a second glance in a city and province where such things at such times are, depressingly, de rigueur. But it is, truth be told, a wonderful sight to behold.

The reason? Well, a scant three months ago the idea of the man occupying this plane, let alone standing upright and exerting himself in any manner, seemed a devastating improbability.

In May, Casat—a beloved and indelible member of the Western Canadian music scene who has lent his voice, keyboards, songs and production skills to everyone from national country treasure Diamond Joe White and blues god Amos Garrett to Greek traditionalists the Rembetika Hipsters and folkies lan Tyson and James Keelaghan—was diagnosed with liver disease.

It was, he says, a case of four decades of living the musician's life finally catching up with him. And a few months later, it almost killed him.

"I was admitted to the hospital in late



The Big Buzz =

August," says Casat, looking shockingly gaunt but with an affirming twinkle in his eyes. "And after three days they called the family together and said, 'You'd better get up here because he's not going to make it through the night."

"Of course, that was news to me because I was just so jacked up on morphine that I thought it was some kind of bad dream."

He chuckles warmly.

"But anyway, I made it through the night and the next morning I woke up and said, 'I want breakfast.' So I turned some kind of corner, I don't know...

"I guess the big guy said, 'We're not ready for your kind just yet'."

Or perhaps, more likely, there was some unfinished business to take care of.

Namely the musician's wonderful self-titled solo debut, which Casat had completed in late 2009 and had just begun to promote in earnest before falling ill.

Whatever the case, after three more weeks in hospital, Casat was released, mid-September, and once again defied prognosis by turning what had been estimated at three to six months of 24-hour home care into a mere five weeks, which, in turn, led to his snow-clearing exploits.

"I guess the main thing is I'm getting better and stronger every day and looking forward to making a whole lot more music," he says.

Here's hoping. But for the time being we can all not only marvel in his past accomplishments—everything from his 18 years as a member of the Edmonton Folk Music



Festival house band to his work with local theatre groups and contributions to various CBC Radio dramas—but bask in that 58-years-in-the-making, 10-track retrospective disc that he terms a "vanity project."

Granted, Casat's playing can be heard on everything from *The Cold Club* album by Garrett, Oscar Lopez, Karl Roth and Dave Wilkie to other efforts by Tim Hus and Jo-El Sonnier, but this was the first time the sideman became the main man.

His voice rich and familiar, his playing masterful and joyous, and the songs, themselves, assured and at home in the worlds of jazz, roots and blues, one wonders why it took so long for him to fully step into the spotlight.

"Life kept getting in the way," Casat says simply, before offering a somewhat ironic explanation of the project's inception almost three years ago.

"My partner at the time jokingly said,
'You know you've got to get this stuff
down in some shape or form before you're
not around to do it anymore.' So, I was really happy to do that."

The time and care Casat took in recording the material, which ranges from his gorgeous self-penned 1968 ballad *Marjorie* to the funky Allen Toussaint classic *Yes We Can*, are on full display. As are the relationships he's forged over his lifetime, with such fellow regional luminaries as Tim Williams, Donald Ray Johnson, Craig Korth, Jenny Allen and Garrett all making an appearance, adding textures to a supple and sensational release.

But again, the disc is all about Casat, a man who admits he prefers to fly under the radar—hell, he doesn't even have a website and right now the album is only available by e-mailing him directly at roncasat@ shaw.ca—but also a man who now seems to be comfortable having his music and skills appreciated.

"It's been a really interesting time and I'm sure it will just continue to get better," he says. "I'm really optimistic at this point in my life. It's been quite a journey, that's for sure."

And one that's not even remotely near its end.

- By Mike Bell



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The Good Thief

Inspiration deserted Ron Hynes.
Cocaine almost killed him. Now, with
the release of the uplifting Stealing
Genius, his dark days appear behind
him. Jean Hewson hears how Hynes
found salvation amidst Newfoundland's literary icons.

Ron Hynes, one of Canada's most respected and active songwriters, recently considered packing it all in. After the release of his self-titled album, Ron Hynes, in 2006, he went through a dry spell where he wrote very little for a couple of years.

"After writing songs for 40 years it just wasn't happening. I started to think, maybe, I should go somewhere else and do something else for awhile. Maybe move to Portugal, change my name to Joseph O'Neill and work as a carpenter."

Then in the midst of his writer's block. Ron had a gig at the Writers at Woody Point Festival in Gros Morne National Park. on Newfoundland's west coast, and came across Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems, a book of poetry written by Randall Maggs and inspired by the life of hockey player Terry Sawchuk.

"I walked around Woody Point reading it out loud all day. Randall really did something with that book. He made hockey fans out of poets and novelists; people who never cared about hockey before. That book inspired the song *Sawchuk*. After I wrote that, it occurred to me why not go one step farther and go to Des Walsh, Al Pitmann, Donna Morrissey—all my favourite writers—for inspiration?"

A friend offered Ron their house in Woody Point after the Writer's Festival. It became a songwriter's retreat, where he took advantage of his newfound inspiration. For more than a month, Ron enjoyed the quiet company of his dog, his guitar, and

the books of some of Newfoundland's bestloved authors. Rising early in the morning, he would write until late at night, pausing only for meals and the scattered walk along the peaceful shores of Bonne Bay.

The end result was Stealing Genius, his poignant and uplifting eighth solo album. It is the third CD he has released on the Borealis Recording Company label, as well as the third under the direction of veteran producer Paul Mills. "Initially, Paul wasn't sure where to go with the record. My two other albums with him, Get Back Change and my self-titled, were like twins. We had traditional instrumentation: acoustic guitars, fiddles, mandolins, banjo, Dobros ... but because of the nature of this work. I wanted a different 'wall of sound' and we went for horns and strings, a little like Ron Hynes meets Van Morrison.

"Paul brings a lot to the table. He doesn't have that huge producer ego. He is capable of seeing what is unique about an artist and tries to bring that out. I have a lot of freedom with him and I'm part of all the decisions. It really is a collaboration."

In addition to promoting his new CD, Ron is also the centre of a media storm surrounding the film Ron Hynes: The Man of a Thousand Songs. Directed by William MacGillivray, the film, which debuted to positive reviews at the Toronto International Film Festival, is an intimate look at Ron Hynes: musician, recovering addict, St. John's corner boy and lovable scoundrel.

"People tend to think that because it's about me, it's my work, but it's not; it's Bill MacGillivray's film. I'm just the subject of the work. I loved doing it. I felt really naked at first. Stuff that I would normally never talk about privately, I just chose to go there. I felt there was enough distance between myself and my days as an addict that made it more comfortable for me to talk about it."

At the height of his cocaine addiction, Ron went from a healthy 156 pounds to an emaciated 107. "I took all the mirrors out of my house. I looked ravaged. Nothing, only translucent flesh and bone. Never mind your Weight Watcher programs, just get some coke and the pounds'll drop off ya!" he says with a grim chuckle.

Black humour aside, he admits it wasn't funny at the time, and that his addiction almost killed him. And although those

days are behind him, he remains vigilant.
"I've made my peace with that guy, but I'm always looking over my shoulder to see if he's coming at me. Addiction ... you never really recover. It's insidious and you just slide into it. It's not a conscious decision. I didn't get out of bed one morning and say, 'Hmmm, I must become a cocaine addict for awhile.' You just turn around one day and you're selling everything you own to buy drugs. You don't think of anything else, you don't do anything else. You can end your life like that, and I almost did. I came really close."

One of the casualties of the bad ol' days was Ron's precious Gibson SJ. Purchased at O'Brien's Music Store in St. John's in 1967, he sold the guitar to pay off drug debts.

"It was my first good guitar. I wrote Sonny's Dream on it and Atlantic Blue ... everything." His girlfriend, Susan, tracked down the guy who bought the guitar and made arrangements to buy it back and present it to Ron for his 60th birthday. "I came back to the hotel room after a sound check for a gig at the [St. John's International] Women's Film Festival. There was a brandnew Gibson acoustic guitar case on the bed. I opened it up and there was a piece of paper inside that said, 'early Happy Birthday,' and there it was; my old friend."

With his troubled past in the rearview mirror. Ron's sights are set on the road ahead. His attitude toward his own future is best summed up by the lyrics of one of the songs on Stealing Genius. The phrase "30 for 60" refers to a bid in the card game called 120s. Originally from the British Isles, this ancient game (also known as 45s or auction) is wildly popular in Newfoundland and is also found in other parts of Atlantic Canada and the eastern seaboard. In 120s, if you bid 30 you have to win all the tricks or plays, which, if successful, will garner the player 60 points. It is a risky bid if you don't have good cards, and the highest card is generally the five of hearts or whichever suit is trump.

"The song 30 for 60 is based on the poem of the same name by [Newfoundland poet] Al Pitmann. He went to see his father on his death bed and the old man said to him, 'Al, don't wait till you have the five in your hand before you go 30 for 60'... and he wasn't talking about cards."

For the Record

Grammy Award-winning banjo picker Alison Brown fronts her own boundary-breaking Quartet when not running one of North America's premier roots labels. Mike Sadava takes stock.

A lison Brown often tells the story of sneaking in a copy of *Bluegrass Unlimited* into the reams of financial information she was supposed to be absorbing.

That was in the late '80s, when Brown's overwhelming drive to play banjo was battling with the career as an investment banker she had started with Smith Barney after getting an MBA from UCLA.

The banjo won this duel, and Brown went on to become a Grammy-winning artist whose jazzy instrumentals have carved new ground for the scope of the banjo.

Although the right side of her brain won that battle, the left side is still functioning very well. She still has a head for business. Her rootsy label, Compass Records, started around a kitchen table, is now thriving, with more than 250 titles and even a citation as a model of entrepreneurship from Brown's alma mater as an undergraduate, Harvard.

It's a balancing act for sure, spending 40 or 50 hours per week at the Compass office in Nashville with her husband and bass player, Garry West, raising a young family, occasionally touring (the quartet has just released a live album, *Live at Blair*.) And, if there is a spare moment, playing the banjo and composing.

But it adds up to quite a career on both sides of the music business.

Her creative side started developing early. She picked up guitar at the age of eight, and banjo at 10 after hearing an Earl Scruggs recording.

"The banjo is not something I chose,"
Brown says over the phone from Nashville.
"I feel it chose me. I just heard it and I had to learn how to do that."

By the age of 16 she was winning national banjo competitions, and was soon touring with fiddle player Stuart Duncan. Her parents were always supportive, but didn't think it would ever be more than "an interesting hobby to talk about at cocktail parties."

She went off to Harvard, originally with plans of becoming a doctor, but switched to arts and then went to grad school in California to study business.

She kept playing, and by 1989 had left the world of investment banking to tour



with Alison Krauss. In 1990 she released her first solo album, *Simple Pleasures*, which earned a Grammy nomination. The following year she became the first woman to win an instrumental award from the International Bluegrass Music Association.

She met West in 1992 when they were both touring with Michelle Shocked, and in 1994 they formed the core of the Alison Brown Quartet with pianist John R. Burr. The quartet has put out about 10 discs, including a couple with fiddle/mandolin ace Joe Craven.

Brown feels fortunate to have had such a solid core for such a long time (the current drummer is Larry Atamaniuk, a Canadian who played with the legendary blues band Crowbar in the '70s).

It's all too common in the music industry that the big labels are looking for the next big thing to come along, and bands aren't given the chance to continue developing, she says. In the quartet it's always "a challenge to structure the banjo into a context." With the unusual interplay between banjo and piano, and with the occasional wicked Brown guitar composition thrown into the mix, there aren't many bands to model themselves after.

While she understands why some critics compare the quartet to Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, she doesn't see it.

"We take a gentler, more melodic approach. If we refer to jazz it's the late '50s or early '60s, Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass," while the Flecktones have more in common with acid jazz.

Although her own compositions have left bluegrass far behind, Brown herself hasn't. She still gets called for sessions for the likes of Stuart Duncan and Louisa Branscombe, and has produced albums for Peter Rowan and Dale Anne Bradley.

"I don't miss it because I feel I'm still in it ... I'm really lucky because I didn't have to leave the bluegrass thing behind, and I'm lucky to have my own band to explore other things."

And then there's Compass Records. In this digital age when record stores are falling like bowling pins, it is a challenge to run a company that relies on sales of physical product for 75 per cent of its revenue, with 25 per cent in digital

downloads.

But in her neck of the woods, a variety of roots music people still want those discs.

"You can't autograph a digital download, and selling records at gigs is a big part of the folk world. I think there's still a demand for physical product in the medium term."

It's all high quality stuff, including the entire Green Linnet catalogue of British and Irish folk music to which Compass acquired the worldwide non-digital rights. Compass has everyone from the Waifs to the Waybacks to Martin Simpson to Kevin Burke. They are all artists that Brown and West like, and they take pride in Compass being an artist-friendly label. But they also want to ensure that the business end will work, which means that the artists are touring and have effective management support behind them.

While there are more opportunities out there for roots musicians to make a career, it's also more competitive. Brown points out that when the quartet recorded its first disc, 10,000 discs were released in North America. Last year that number increased to 106,000.

Brown has no regrets about leaving investment banking behind, but that experience has helped her run a record company, both in practical terms of being able to make a spreadsheet, and in terms of getting credibility with lenders.

Brown and West are also co-chairing the board of the National Folk Festival, an itinerant festival that changes location every three years and features a wide variety of traditional music and draws about 150,000 people. It is coming to Nashville next Labour Day, and the planning is taking up a lot of time.

All of this is leaving Brown less time to compose than she'd like.

"To me, writing is alone time when you can put aside everything else you're thinking about and let your mind wander. Before having kids and a record company, after dinner I could just go and play the banjo.

"But at the same time, because we've been doing this for such a long time, we're getting smarter about what works."

Songs of Praise

Finest Kind spent months arranging the harmonies on their delightful new disc, For Honour And For Gain. "We vote every note," they tell Pat Langston.

66T Tere, we'll show you what I mean," says Shelley Posen, after explaining how he and the other two members of Ottawa's Finest Kind arrange a song. Posen sings a note, Ian Robb jumps in with the bass line, and Ann Downey circles above them both. Suddenly their hands are jabbing the air like goose beaks, visual indicators to one another of where their voices are going next. Our corner of the busy coffee shop falls silent as the Saturday afternoon crowd cocks an ear to this impromptu display of rich, commanding a cappella. The short demonstration over, listeners applaud, and Posen jokes loudly, "As you were, as you were. Thank you. CDs out front."

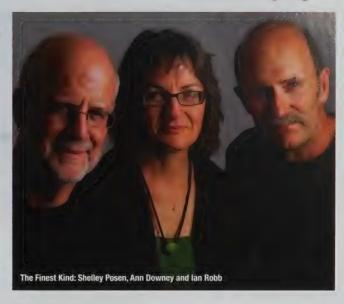
That snatch of music exemplifies what Finest Kind does best: producing spellbinding close harmony arranged with a near-obsessive attention to precision yet managing to sound fresh and natural.

Working at it a few hours here, a few hours there, it can take the trio—whose guiding principle is, "We vote every note"—months to arrange a tune. "You wouldn't ever hear, 'That's good enough'," says Downey.

"We need time with a song," adds Robb, a native Londoner who's maintained his accent despite having immigrated to Canada 40 years ago. "We have to ask ourselves if what we've imposed on a song has anything to do with the song itself. We have to sit back and be the audience."

That painstakingly thoughtful process has resulted in the audio delight that is For Honour & for Gain. Half a cappella and half accompanied, the disc (samples and CD available from Fallen Angle Music at www.ianrobb.com) is the trio's latest of five albums recorded since they formed 20 years ago. One of those five, by the way, was recorded with Canadian actor John D. Huston.

In the Finest Kind tradition, the new disc mixes old ballads with country classics, protest tunes with parodies, and slips in a



new Christmas carol.

Asked which song on the album took the most work, Robb says *Thomas and Nancy*. Although the talk veers off in other directions before we fully discuss what made it so tough to work with, Downey does mention that the traditional love ballad is a major challenge harmonically.

"I'm always first attracted by melody, like on this tune," adds Robb. "Then I just hope the words are good."

Robb's mention of melody leads in turn to shaded opinions about whether strict adherence to a song's traditional melody is a sacrosanct rule for Finest Kind.

Robb, a calmly insistent man who, preretirement, made his living as a hospital lab technologist, says he has, on occasion, tinkered with a melody.

Posen, Toronto-born and by day a professional folklorist at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, after laying down the "sacrosanet" rule with his customary certainty, concedes that maybe they are a little less rigid on this matter than when they first began working together.

Downey, an in-demand bass player who spent part of her youth in musically robust Texas and New Mexico, ends up splitting the difference. "Out of respect for the integrity of the song, you don't change melody.

But change is part of the folk process, too."

Lively opinions and a willingness to achieve consensus, one suspects, has helped keep the threesome energized and united since they first teamed up. That was after a song circle where they found themselves sitting together. Each had worked musically with one of the others, and serendipity tempted them to all sing a quick tune together. The result was an ear-opener.

"We said we should get together again," recalls Posen. "Then Ian called the next day and said, 'Let's try it.' To find voices that blend like ours, that only happens once or twice in a lifetime."

Since then, the three have played folk festivals and concerts on both sides of the border and in Britain. They've built the kind of devoted fan base you'd expect of a trio that's not only superb but also a refreshing change from the sometimes wearisome parade of earnest singer-songwriters.

Each has also vigorously pursued other musical paths.

Robb, a concertina player and noted singer of traditional English songs, is a charter member of Toronto's decades-old Friends of Fiddler's Green, composer (his pub anthem *The Old Rose and Crown* comes to mind) and holder of a Canadian Folk Music Award for best traditional singer thanks to

his work with the Ottawa band Jiig.

Downey, a chatty dynamo of musical activity who counts herself lucky to have been a stay-at-home mom, works with half a dozen bands, including a couple of informal jazz concoctions and Sneezy Waters's group. She also plays guitar and banjo, and with Robb is a member of the contra dance gang the Old Sod Band.

Posen, a multi-instrumentalist who holds a doctorate in folklore, is also a songwriter (No More Fish. No Fishermen has been recorded by the likes of Gordon Bok) and has recorded solo albums. He's taught shape note singing, directed choirs and launched pub carolling, an Ottawa tradition.

This embarrassment of musical riches bubbles up in albums like the new one. One minute, the trio is singing the Civil War number *Tenting on the Old Camp Ground*, the next it's off on a cover of Dickey Lee's *She Thinks I Still Care*, giving the country classic a jaunty interpretation that underscores the song's deeply ironic tale of heartbreak.

"We do country songs that don't sound country, and English folk songs that don't sound like English folk songs," says Posen. "Sometimes people object, but we sing what we like the way we like."

Elsewhere, the trio covers Farm! Farm!, a cynical, music hall-styled tune about homesteading in Saskatchewan that features Gilbert and Sullivan touches and some terrific piano by Jeff McClintock.

Robb or Posen take lead on most songs, although Downey, accompanied by her banjo, takes charge on the Appalachian standard with the self-explanatory title Short Life of Trouble.

Asked what's important to them about such tunes, each answers as distinctively as you'd expect from three independent people who seem simultaneously joined at the musical hip.

"We record to sing, not to preserve songs," says Posen.

Says Robb, "People don't learn new songs by singing at parties like they used to. So that's one reason I sing: so people can hear and learn these songs."

"I'm in it for the harmony and the singing," says Downey. "I'm sure that there's something physical that happens to your brain waves when people sing in groups like this."



Dead Reckoning

Dave Swarbrick read his obituary and lived to tell the tale. Having overcome numerous ailments, the former Fairport Convention fiddler has just released a superb solo record with a Canadian connection. Ken Hunt is all ears.

ave Swarbrick has a new record. As apt as apt can be, the violinist and composer has called it *raison d'être*. While the title is steadfastly lower case, the words come aureoled. It is a work of which he is inordinately proud. He made—better expressed handcrafted—it between 2002 and 2010, largely at his home in Coventry in the British Midlands but also, to a degree, in Canada because of his interactions with Jason Wilson.

He fashioned it over eight of the darkest years of his life when he was in and out of hospital, gigging resolutely (sometimes with air tanks beside him), surviving health scares and lung transplant surgery. Not without reason can one call it the product of his will to live and reason for living. Not without reason are the first thanks on the album to Britain's National Health Service and transplant team at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

If you need the low-down on Dave Swarbrick's career, then that is what the Internet is for. David Cyril Swarbrick was born in April 1941 in the fair county of Surrey, just below London. "My father's name was Frederick Cyril. He gave me it, the rotten sod." Setting up gags is one of his fondnesses/weaknesses.

"Actually, I've lately started signing myself 'Cyril'. I don't know why I do. I think it's partly because only people who know me know that that's my name. I never know whether to call myself Swarb or Dave. Usually people who know me call me Dave. But for some reason, I refer to myself as Swarb. It doesn't make any sense at all. So, I started putting Cyril now, which means that I really know you, you are a friend of mine, and I allow you in to see my silly name."

Raison d'être is a work of profoundest maturity from the messiah of British folk fiddle and, to lift from Life of Brian, a very naughty boy. Musically what sets it and its strange symmetries apart is the repertoire. Its deeply researched, hardly fad-hopping material ranges across, say, Playford's Dancing Master of 1651 to 1728, the Daniel Wright and John Walsh collections, and John Ravenscroft's composing of the early 1700s.

"It's not like a set-list! There is a whole pile of stuff of a similar period that I never used at all. For one reason or another, it didn't fit. With some I went as far a recording roughs to see whether they'd fit. There were from that period as many as, maybe, another 20 different sets."

A leavening of original material includes one dedicated to his wife, Jill. "Sweet Alban started off as a mandolin piece. Alban

is her middle name. When you're writing—it must be the same for you—you're not quite sure how it's going to end up. You just do it. It started off with completely different intentions." He chortles. "Sometimes the hardest thing with them is naming the fuckers."

Dave is eager to explain the Canadian connection for *Penguin Eggs*: "I had an e-mail from this guy called Jason Wilson—I'd never heard of him—asking would I be interested in doing a fiddle on *Matty Groves*. He was putting together an album and wanted to do *Matty Groves*. I thought this all sounded a bit iffy. I get one or two requests like that and they're never really very good. But when he sent me the track, I was completely and utterly devastated because I thought it was absolutely fantastic.

"One thing led to another and he asked if I'd come over and perform it in Toronto. By this time I was hooked. I thought he was a magical musician and magical arranger and I thought the whole band was fantastic. He said he wanted to arrange some things of mine and it just so happened that he picked the very first track on the very first album that I ever made. Just accidentally."

Colloquially and idiomatically, we drop in the word haunting when describing a favourite melody or a special performance. In Swarbrick's case, the word comes alive with further nuance. On the morning of April 20, 1999, he woke up to discover that he had joined an elite circle that includes the author, actress and all-round socialite party girl Mary (Perdita) Robinson and the quoted-out-of-context "Back to Africa" politician Marcus Garvey. He got to read his own obituary and, unlike Garvey, survived the experience.

While "The report of my death is an exaggeration"—Mark Twain's response to a quite different prompt—is good, Swarbrick's "It's not the first time I have died in Coventry" was sheer class.

In a typical display of chutzpah/strength/bravado, he took financial advantage of the experience. "I used to take the photocopies round the clubs and sell them for a pound each. The *Daily Telegraph* got in touch. What happened was this journo wanted to do a story about me selling them. I never gave second thought to it. This appeared in the bloody newspaper about Swarb selling

his own obituaries. I got a letter from the Telegraph saying I'd gotta desist and stop this immediately. Copyright infringement, I suppose. And if I didn't they were going to sue me. I wrote back and said (a cackle of laughter emanates) 'Oh, please do. Please'."

He becomes serious. "I don't want to get funny about this but when you have a transplant you know that there's an end to it. You know that there's an end to everybody's life. Everybody knows they're going to go. But I know a little bit more: that, barring an accident, I know what the limit is. I can't put it any plainer than that.

"Although at the end the listener's the final judge, I made the record for me. I didn't make it for anybody else. I didn't make it for the paying public or a record company. I made it for me."

With thanks to Martin Carthy, Santosh Sidhu and Jill Swarbrick.

Milestones

Pat Langston spends time with songwriter Lynn Miles discussing the intimate details of her new disc, Fall For Beauty. It's her eighth album and our man considers it her best yet.

Lynn Miles likes to watch men watch women. "I like to see them fall apart when a beautiful woman walks by, even if they're tough guys. There's something very romantic and charming about it, something so human."

Miles, Ottawa-based and one of Canada's top singer-songwriters, is referring to a line in Cracked and Broken, a track on Fall For Beauty, her eighth and best studio album to date. "The girls fall for the bad boys / And the bad boys fall for beauty," goes the full line, capturing so much of what's right, wrong and eternally true about attraction.

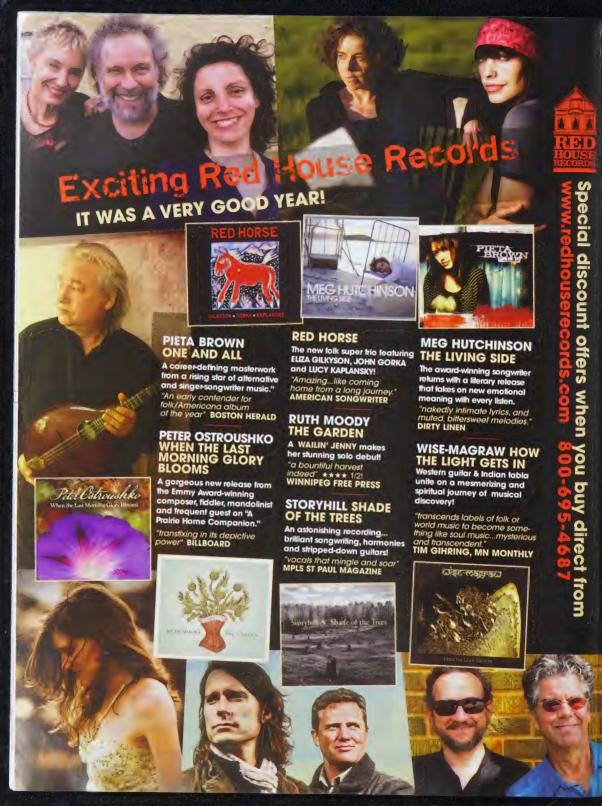
The image of everyday life—so often a scurrying, worry-plagued thing—briefly transformed by a flash of loveliness is a hopeful one. It suggests we're still moved in a way that's at once purely sexual and transcendent. And it reminds us that beauty illuminates life down here among the mortals. Not bad for half a dozen words.

Although Miles is too good an artist to whack you over the head with repetition, she does weave beauty through the album. (Although it was released in October, she says she had no idea when the CD would hit the streets and that the title is a pun only fortuitously.)

Beauty is there, of course, in *Cracked* and *Broken*, which, like much of Miles's work, pits yearning against contentment, a pretty accurate reflection of everyday life.

It's also present in spades in Something Beautiful, the album's opening cut and a clarion call for more grace, understanding—however you choose to define beauty—in our daily lives. A clear, bright production, an urgent rhythm, and Miles's characteristic delivery—a blend of longing and steely





will—sweep the listener into the song's chorus, which rings with celebration bringing to mind the triumphant peel of bells in Martina McBride's *Independence Day*.

"It's definitely an anthem. I could hear little kids singing it," she says. "We live in an age where not a lot of care is taken. That's why it feels good to be in an old building or somewhere like the new art gallery in Toronto where someone took a lot of time. You feel better, you go to a higher plane and imagine a better world. It makes you go, 'Oh, wow, this is human potential here!' If you go to a Walmart, it's sort of the opposite."

Not that you should imagine Miles is going Pollyanna on us.

True, the Montreal-area native has stopped drinking, forcing her to dig deeper into herself and life now that alcohol's shield is down. "It's easy to get into drunken trouble and then write about it, and it seems romantic and crucial, and it is for a certain time in your life. I just reached a point where I said, 'OK, I can keep doing that or I can have a better life'."

Still, Miles says she has a "deep well of sorrow" on which to draw for her music, and that her take on life will always be a bittersweet one. At 52, and having lost her father in the past couple of years, she's also more attuned to mortality.

And as much as she loves watching hard-asses go all marshmallowy at the sight of gorgeousness, she's also an inveterate rubber-necker when folks, herself included, crash and burn and have to reignite their lives. Tell her about a marriage breakup, and "I feel happy for them because I think, 'Oh, now you can start over again'." Her perspective, as she says, is a bittersweet one. And after all, where would any artist be without an instinct for the dramatic?

Her belief that re-launching is always possible powers up *I Will*. Like many other tunes on the largely country-folk album, it features a melody that's open and instantly memorable. That melodic freshness, she says, results from producer, guitarist and old pal Ian Lefeuvre encouraging her to explore new chord possibilities.

The song was written when Miles was near bankruptcy with no work on the horizon. "I don't mind telling the world I'm crashing and burning because everyone's doing it all the time, and I know I'll rise up again."

It's a conviction she's maintained

throughout her three decades in the music business. That she's always met the rent and phone bill no matter how dire her financial straits proves her conviction valid. Autonomy, she adds, is the payoff for frugality and self-belief.

The song is also rooted in her desire to wall off the negativity that surrounds us thanks to 24-hour-a-day media and the gloomy words of prognosticators. Miles adds that she's much taken with Jeremy Rifkin's latest book, *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis.* Rifkin's insistence that a new global empathic consciousness is the only way to thwart climate catastrophe can take form in small but important ways, says Miles.

Her mother, for example, knits little yarn flowers on the bus and, unseen, drops them into the bags and purses of fellow passengers. A small thing, admittedly, but one that connects people through kindness, suggests Miles, and another example of "how beautiful life is."

Wherever her empathy gene came from, Miles's is a powerful one. It shines through especially in *Little Bird*, an amalgam of people she discovered when she read *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction*. Dr. Gabor Maté's book about working with Vancouver addicts.

Her deep well of compassion also underpins Love Doesn't Hurt. She wrote the ballad after hearing Oprah say time and again, "love doesn't hurt" following the revelation that pop songstress Rhianna had been beaten up by her boyfriend. Resonant in its understated acoustic arrangement, the song reminds us that while love can leave emotional scars-Miles's tune clearly references Love Hurts, the 1960s-era ballad first recorded by the Everly Brothers which is about exactly that - physical injury is something quite different. "Love doesn't leave its mark on you / Love doesn't leave you black and blue," sings Miles, and, as a man, you feel ashamed even if you've never so much as thought of harming a woman.

Miles says she wants to play the song on *Oprah*. "I'm working on it. I want to play that for her and take the money from downloads and give it to women's shelters. Plus, I want to take my mother to Chicago and have a lovely time. That song, really, says Oprah was right: Love doesn't hurt, love doesn't hurt."

Northern Light

As one of the pre-eminent flute, whistle and uilean pipers in the U.K., Michael McGoldrick's list of collaborators reads like a *Who's Who* of traditional musicians. Tony Montague collars him about his latest fab' solo recording, *Aurora*.

ooking positively beatific, Michael McGoldrick closes his eyes and lets the music flow through him like a torrent. His fingers dance over the chanter of his Irish bagpipes to deep electric bass lines and the lightening-quick slap of hands on Indian tablas.

The audience at England's Towersey Village Festival, a summer's end folk bash now in its 47th year, follows each cut and roll that McGoldrick makes, every little shift in rhythm and tone, his artful and effortless transitions from jigs to reels and romps then back again. The Manchesterborn piper is in full cry with seven of his best friends beside him.

McGoldrick—who plays uillean pipes, flutes and whistles in a range of shapes and sizes—is busy creating dynamic new hybrids of Irish music, with colours from world music, rock, jazz, and funk. Following Fused (2000) and Wired (2005) his magnificent new album, Aurora, represents a return to a rootsier, less experimental sound.

"If you take all the tunes on *Aurora* and strip them back you could easily sit down and play them in a session whereas some of





the tunes of *Fused* and *Wired* are—because of the arrangements—the kind you'd only play in a band."

But McGoldrick is still peeling back the boundaries and crossing genres. In the spring and summer he toured as a member of guitar-great Mark Knopfler's Get Lucky band, an experience that left him with one particularly bright memory.

"We played the Manchester Evening News Arena and it was the biggest gig I've ever played here at home," says McGoldrick, a mercurial musician and a family man. "Me parents were there, and me wife, me kids, me uncles, you name it. I was very proud."

So is Manchester, where he continues to live. McGoldrick learned whistle there at an early age from his father, a construction worker, and he was a rising star of the local Irish music association Comhaltas Ceoltóiri. At the age of 15, while still at school, he joined the Celtic rock band Toss The Feathers, riding on the Poguesian wave of the '80s.

"The van used to pull up outside the school, I got in, and we headed for London. I'd get back home early on Monday morning and go back to school. It was brilliant. No inhibitions, just, 'Yeah, gig in London? Great—let's do it!' We slept in the van and got up next day to do a gig. We'd do four over the weekend."

After tossing the Feathers, McGoldrick was a founder of the U.K. flute-based quartet Flook, and an early member of Irish tradition-based quintet Lúnasa. He plays with Scottish tradition-based group Capercaillie and is much in demand as a producer and guest musician.

For fans of progressive Celtic music, the lineup of his own band reads like a Guinness-induced fantasy: Capercaillie colleagues Donald Shaw on keyboards and Ewen Vernal on bass, former Flookmates Joe Boyd on guitar and John Joe Kelly on bodhran, James Mackintosh of Shooglenifty on drums, longtime friend Dezi Donnelly on fiddle, and for extra spice jazz trumpeter and adventurer Neil Yates and Indian tabla player Parvinder Bharat.

When McGoldrick unleashed this sonic horde on a set of his own freshly minted reels, the Towersey crowd—a mix of teens and dyed-in-the wooly-cap folkies—exploded into dance; no resistance was possible. "Everybody in the band is at the top of his game and I trust the ideas that float between us. People have a free rein for playing on the tunes I write."

Not all the music of *Aurora* is Irish-based. Appalachian roots multi-instrumentalist Dirk Powell's *Waterbound* marks McGoldrick's debut as a singer. His soft, smoky and understated voice is impressive, with Powell himself playing banjo behind it. "I've spent years with people singing but I've only just started doing it. A song I'd really like to have a go at is Richard Thompson's *Bee's Wing* or maybe Nick Drake's *Northern Sky*."

McGoldrick continues to play in new combos with old friends. He recently got together with fellow former Lúnasa members John McSherry (uillean pipes and whistles) and Donogh Hennessy (guitar) to perform in Belfast, Derry and Dublin, and the trio reunites for a bigger tour of Ireland in May. He's also been playing with fellow Mancunian fiddler Colin Farrell, whose album McGoldrick recently produced. The album is to be released for the Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow.

"I'm opening the festival on Jan. 13 and I've invited Celtic musicians, Scottish musicians and [Indian] tabla player Zakir Hussein. And I'll also be doing the Transatlantic Session with Donald Shaw, Aly Bain, Tim O'Brien, Dirk Powell, Jerry Douglas, Phil Cunningham, John Doyle, and Danny Thompson, with Allison Moorer and Paul Brady as singers."

It promises to be a feast—the kind of musical adventure McGoldrick loves.

He certainly hasn't lost his taste for experimentation. Another of his current projects is The Future Traditional Collective.

"I'm doing it with [guitarist] Ian Fletcher. I used to play with him in a band based around electronica about 20 years ago, doing club nights where I'd incorporate the pipes and flute into a different sound—not necessarily playing jigs and reels. We just finished recording. The sound is everything from Afro-Cuban to dubstep to jungle to drum and bass, hip-hop, flamenco—tons of influences in there. Taking it out live is interesting because it's all running loops from laptops. We've done three gigs so far and it's worked."

McGoldrick's dream is a relatively modest one: to get the members of his band and a few other guests together in a place where they can be left alone for a long time.

"Sometimes I think a record is done too quickly because all the people I play with are so busy. I wonder what kind of album we could make if we were able to be in the same place for a month and sit and play and record—do it live rather than in stages. It's not a big wish but it would be just amazing."

Exile On Mainstreet

Karim Saada left Algiers for Montréal but took with him the centuries-old traditional songs of the capital of Algeria. These he fashioned into the Canadian Folk Music Awards' World Music Album of the Year. Julie Miller pays a visit.

arim Saada steps onstage to close the first night of a multicultural festival in southern Quebec. It is unseasonably cool for mid-August, and damp; the people in the audience sit stiffly, hunched over against the unaccustomed cold. He walks to his place at the front of the stage, picks up his mandol--an instrument that found its way from Spain to Algeria centuries ago-and gently plucks a lilting, modal, and mellow-toned melody highly evocative of North African heat, and of ancient trade routes of the Maghreb. People sit up straighter. Some women wearing colourful North African dresses stand up in the aisles to dance.

With words of welcome for the audience, Karim picks up another stringed instrument. A short melody tinged with longing and nostalgia soars out into the night. Karim pauses, nods to the band, and all six musicians erupt into the bold rhythms and richly textured sounds of a song deeply rooted in châabi, the traditional music of Algiers.

He is playing the banjo, one of châabi's signature instruments, and he sings *La Danse de l'exilé* in both French and Arabic. It's the title track of his debut album, which won him the 2009 Canadian Folk Music Award as World Music Artist of the Year (Solo).

"I went into exile / Fleeing my country / ... My destiny would not let me / Live in peace." he sings as he smiles broadly. His "destiny" has allowed him to bring his beloved châabi music to a new audience, and this audience, on this night, has forgotten all about the cold. The music bathes them in warmth, and they dance.

We meet a few weeks later and Karim chuckles gently as he says, "That's a charm of Arab music: the lyrics can be sad but the rhythm is always upbeat." The word he uses for sad is déchirant, which literally means being torn apart. "That song (La

Danse de l'exilé) speaks of our experience of the dark years in Algeria, in the 1990s. You know, everyone was affected, everyone. Although I was already in Canada, the telephone would ring with the news ..." Karim uses that word again to describe the experience: déchirant. Ripped apart.

It became clear to Karim that he would leave his home in Algeria after the events of October 1988, "There was a general strike; people took to the streets to demand democracy," he relates. Things turned ugly. He had a strong sense of foreboding and made plans to go as soon as possible. Karim chuckles again, something he does often, as he recounts his arrival in Montreal 21 years ago—alone, in late December, temperatures "so cold they burned; a strange sensation"-and the bittersweet and destabilizing experience of leaving his family behind while at the same time discovering a new life in Montreal, where there was ample opportunity to develop his eclectic musical tastes.

"I like all music, all genres," Karim says.
"Montreal is wonderful. You can experience all cultures

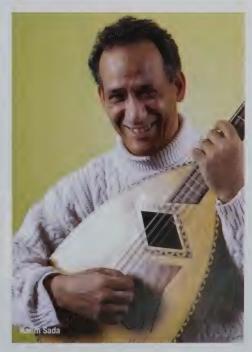
here, and hear all styles of music. One night jazz, next night African; it's fantastic."

Ironically, Algeria, at least historically, also has a long tradition of openness and cross-cultural fertilization, Classical Algerian music has its roots in the Andalusian culture that developed in the Muslim kingdoms of Cordoba, Seville and Granada, beginning in the 700s. Over many centuries it gradually developed and formalized into complex musical structures called noubas, passed on by oral tradition, of which 12 complete forms survive today. Each nouba, based

on one mode or scale, is dense and multi-

By the late 19th century this music had become the music of the elite-"of the rich," Karim explains. "It didn't belong to the people anymore, they didn't have access to it." It was around this time that châabi music began to develop. At first inspired by Arab-Andalusian vocal traditions, it began to quietly flourish in certain parts of the Casbah (the old walled city of Algiers), in places where people gathered to drink coffee and to smoke. By the 1950s however, the people had embraced the ever-evolving châabi, which means popular, as their own, and it was played on many occasions, from weddings to funerals. The banjo had become one of the key instruments, having been brought to Algeria by American servicemen towards the end of the Second World War.

Karim chuckles as he says, "The Americans brought it, yes, but of course it was really a re-introduction of the banjo to Africa. It started out in Senegal in one form, crossed the Atlantic where it became

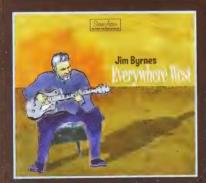




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the banjo as we know it now, and returned, this time to Algeria, where we developed a new technique for playing it over the years. People are always surprised when I say that there were many, many banjo players in Algiers when I was growing up."

Karim learned the banjo and the mandol from his father, while revering El Hadj M'Hamed el Anka, the musician credited with châabi's expansion and development. El Anka created new musical possibilities built on elements drawn from classical music. The improvised, evocative and freestyle introductions of many of Karim's songs and instrumental pieces, for example, are typical of châabi but rooted in much older traditions.

"I have a great admiration for El Hadj M'Hamed el Anka," Karim says warmly. "He drew upon the work of Algerian poets for the lyrics; they used a very subtle language full of metaphor. You can listen three, four, five times, and each time you learn something new, you hear something different. And he was always searching for a new sound, for new textures, in his music."

This same subtlety and integrity, this same openness and search for the new, can be said of Karim Saada, who has added new instruments and sounds to the music he was raised on, while constantly seeking fresh inspiration. He has travelled far, on more than one level.

"I like my life now," he says simply, as

he puts the finishing touches on his latest album, aptly titled *Aich Lyoum*, which means *Alive Today* or *Living in the Now.* "The rhythms on the new album are even more diversified," he says. "There's a waltz, and an Algerian rumba!" And true to form, he laughs gently.

The Big Meet

The Ontario Council of Folk Festivals annual convention attracts 200-odd musicians and singers who perform at countless showcases. Mike Sadava pounded the hallways of Ottawa's Crowne Plaza Hotel into the wee, wee hours.

The sweltering hotel corridor is jammed with people, guitars and every square inch of wall space is covered with posters. People pass out CDs like they're business cards. Greek bouzouki music blasts out of a room near one end. A young singer-songwriter is belting out bitchy tunes in the next room. Farther on is the blues. There's Celtic, bluegrass and even a sitart to be heard as I wind my way through the crowd past 21 rooms in this temporary honky tonk high-rise.

Welcome to the craziness known as the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals (OCFF), annual convention – Canada's biggest

schmoozefest for the roots music community.

I eventually find my way to a room where Jonathan Byrd is doing a solo set. Byrd was introduced to Canadian audiences last year by Corin Raymond, and he has come all the way from North Carolina. About 15 people and two standup basses are jammed in the room. His country-folk set is mesmerizing, despite the annoying din from the hall.

This is my first time at OCFF, which has been happening since the mid-'80s. I've come from Edmonton to report for Penguin Eggs, and to do a private showcase with Contraband, a hippie-country band that had its heyday long before most of the 800 delegates were born. We're competing with more than 200 other performers for attention from festival artistic directors, house concert promoters, folk clubs, soft-seaters and other luminaries of the music business.

Our 25-minute set in Room 403 of the Crowne Plaza Hotel—known tonight as the Ouzo Power Room—goes well. At least no train wrecks. The ouzo definitely helps our playing. Our audience maxes out at a dozen, and people come and go. The offers aren't exactly rolling in, but we're happy campers.

We've also done a couple of gigs for Art Beat, a commendable feature of OCFF which sends musicians into the community. We have performed at a seniors' home and a palliative care centre, and truly felt

appreciated. Hell, they even laughed at our jokes.

I've got no expectations, and none of the dozens of performers I talk to over the weekend have great expectations of sudden stardom from OCFF. This ain't *Canadian Idol*. We don't even have a disc to put into the drop boxes of talent buyers, who each have at least 100 to haul home.

Thom Swift, a bluesy singer-songwriter from Halifax, has a good career going, including Maple Blues and Eastern Canada Music Association awards. Sure, there's a possibility that he could get a festival gig out of OCFF, but that's not what it's all about, he says.

"This thing is all about community. It's not as important to showcase as coming here and being part of a community, revisiting relationships formed over the years and forming new ones.

"If you're here you're working hard on your career—you're putting one foot in front of the other. I'm not looking for anybody to make me a star."

Matt Tomlinson, a singer/songwriter/producer from Montreal, doesn't have a lot to show yet for his creative efforts, but he wants to learn more about how the business side works, and "just join the party". Without a showcase lined up, he's just a fly on the wall, ready to learn.

Archie Pateman, who plays banjo and guitar with the West Coast Americana band The Breakmen, has flown in just so the band can have a presence. They showcased in 2008, and with a new CD and tour coming up right away, he wants to let people know that the band is around. He didn't even bother to bring an instrument—"I'm just here to schmooze." he says.

Scott Cook, Edmonton's favourite hobo, had nobody but the host at his first show-case at 2:30 a.m. of the Saturday morning, but he is getting lots of visitors to the van that serves as his home when he's on the road, and he jammed until 5:30 a.m. "I got a house concert out of last year, so you never know."

OCFF executive director Peter MacDonald agrees that the conference isn't a magic stairway to the big time, but he says it can have long term effects. An artistic director might not book your act for next summer, but add you to the wish list and hire you a couple of summers down the road.

"I hear that over and over again," Mac-Donald says.

A number of showcases are sponsored by the likes of Borealis Records, the Songwriters Association of Canada, and provincial associations, but the big kahuna showcases that everybody wants to be in are the 24 official showcases.

It's all good stuff, and shows the variation in what we call folk music today. It ranges from the 21st-century protest songs of Jon Brooks to the edgy Twilight Hotel, the jazzy a cappella of Chic Gamine, the poignant slam poetry of Shayne Koyczan, and the old-time porch music of Annie Lou. Most of the 25-minute sets go by too quickly, but they give a good taste of what they offer, and they all have private showcases as well.

Nobody is saying who they'll hire, but Bill Werthmann, director of the Northern Lights Folk Club in Edmonton, says he has a heard a couple of acts for the first time that have really impressed him. He is also making new contacts in the folk community. At a late-night jam, Werthmann and Steve Tennant, who presents house concerts in Perth, ON, talk about sharing information about who's touring.

And in the midst of all the schmoozing and showcasing are some workshops about useful stuff, such as how to set up a board, building audiences, and record production.

I sit in at a session about "world" music, a marketing term that presenters and performers alike seem to despise and confuses people.

Aaron Lightstone, the oud and guitar player of Toronto-based Jaffa Road, says

most people think the band plays klezmer music because it is Jewish, but in reality it is Middle Eastern. Phyllis Stenson, artistic director of the Harrison Folk Festival in British Columbia, recalls the days when nobody wanted to pay African musicians because they were not regarded as professional.

"Presenters need to be educated," Stenson says, "I think it's important for us to be educated about music of all genres."

Brad McEwen, director of the Mill Race festival in Cambridge, ON, says in the hall that he feels OCFF has strayed from its own roots of mentoring and sharing information for festival organizers. He feels there should be more for the people who co-ordinate a festival site or set up the kitchen. This is the first time in five years he has attended OCFF, and he wants to badger the organization to set up more programming for festival co-ordinators.

I do manage to sit in at a meeting of about 15 festival artistic directors, at least until I'm politely and understandably asked to leave. It is a closed meeting, and they'll be discussing stuff they don't want out in public, such as their opinions on specific artists.

But I stay long enough to get a flavour of the challenges and opportunities facing festivals, from dealing with unruly campers to block booking, performers' fees and the shrinking grant pot.

And like most problems in life, these challenges are more easily faced as part of a community, that community of schmoozers who come to OCFF.



Brave Heart

Ewan McLennan's bold and refreshing approach to some dog-eared material has elicited comparisons with the likes of Dick Gaughan—a fact that tickles the lad to no end. Colin Irwin has a word.

Few U.K. debut albums have made such an impact as Ewan McLennan's Rags & Robes. There has been ecstatic championing and extensive airplay from BBC Radio's folk overlord Mike Harding, rave reviews as a result of a rapidly burgeoning gig diary, and a Horizon nomination as Best New Artist at the 2011 BBC Folk Awards.

Quite right, too. There are fleeting appearances from Peter Tickell on fiddle and Jackie Oates on viola and harmony vocals, but this is predominantly built around oldschool values of one chap and his guitar—a restricted, exposed format that will always sort out the men from the rhubarb. That McLennan has emerged from the crowd while concentrating on overly familiar material like *Jock Stewart*. I'm A Rover, As I Roved Out and—wait for it—Auld Lang Syne makes his success all the more remarkable.

With a refreshingly unfussy, uncluttered approach, deft guitar accompaniments, an intimate vocal delivery and some bold arrangements, McLennan quietly gives these old favourites a determined makeover and, rather bravely, even puts his own stamp on tracks like Arthur McBride. Old Man's Tale and Joe Hill, previously regarded as the divine provenance of Paul Brady, Ian Campbell and Pete Seeger/Joan Baez, respectively.

"It's my first proper album and I didn't know what to expect, really, so yes, I'm really pleased and a bit surprised at how well it has been received," says the gently spoken McLennan, a proud son of Edinburgh, now living in Leeds, Yorkshire, in the north of England. "I just wanted to record a collection of the songs I've been playing regularly over the last few years with a minimalist feel.

"I was warned that a lot of the songs were considered hackneyed but I've enjoyed playing them for a few years, audiences



seem to like hearing them, and while it's important to dig up new songs and explore the tradition, there's no point in doing songs just for their obscurity value or deciding not to record songs just because they are well-known. They may be famous songs but a lot of them haven't been recorded since the 1970s..."

It's a fair point. Ewan is just 24, his audience covers a widely varying age range, including a younger generation totally unaware of the story of Joe Hill, the Swedish labourer, writer and union activist framed and executed for murder, or indeed Jamie Foyers, a Scottish volunteer killed in the fight against facism during the Spanish Civil War commemorated in song by Ewan MacColl.

Yet even more impressive—and very likely the direction we will find him pursuing in future—are the two self-written tracks on the album, Another Morning's Beggar and Yorkshire Regiment, both beautifully crafted and deeply poignant. Beggar is inspired by the homeless and destitute he met on the streets of Leeds and York, and Yorkshire Regiment emerged from meetings with families torn apart by the war in Afghanistan.

"It seems natural to write about what you see around you. I've worked informally

with Military Families Against the War and met so many incredible families I felt compelled to write *Yorkshire Regiment*. I was quite nervous about singing it in front of audiences because it's a contentious issue and you never know how people will react but I haven't had any negative reactions to it at all. It has encouraged me to write more issue-based songs."

Due in part to the political undercurrent to his music, not to mention his intricate guitar accompaniments and quietly charged vocals, he's often compared with Dick Gaughan. It's a reference point he finds hugely flattering if not entirely accurate. In fact, he'd never actually heard Gaughan until people started telling him how heavily he must have been influenced by him.

"I just thought, 'Who is this Dick Gaughan?' So I started listening to him and went, 'Wowwww!' Dick is immense. I feel tremendously honoured to be mentioned in the same breath. To get inside a song and bring out the emotion you need to feel its social aspect and that's what he does."

He certainly shares Gaughan's political soul. "Politics in music is unavoidable. Any songs about relationships between people, whether consciously or not, involve discussing a political issue. Even if you could successfully cleanse songs of



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For more information on these artists please contact Jean-François Guindon contact@coopfauxmonnayeurs.com t: 1.514,525.8851







political meaning, which I don't think you necessarily can, it wouldn't be desirable. Should songs not have been written about the civil rights movement or Vietnam? It's an inevitable reaction to describe human conditions and I don't think it's desirable to avoid that. If you want change, music is a powerful tool to achieve it. But it's not the easiest thing to do commercially. There's a current that guides you away from doing anything controversial or step on people's toes or raise passions in a certain way."

Dylan may have been his distant mentor on this path (he names *The Times They Are A'Changing* as a seminal beacon) yet his music is shaped by a broad range of other influences, with classical and jazz playing a prominent role in his musical education. His first instrument was piano, later adopting guitar as he rigorously studied classical music, practising scales every day right through to his teens.

"It was good," he says. "There are a lot of limitations and downsides about playing classical music but it was good training and I still have a classical style of playing, even in the way I hold the guitar."

He grew up in Edinburgh in a family of catholic musical tastes, a strong inclination to sing at every opportunity, and a large record collection that exposed him to both a lot of Scottish and Irish folk music and American artists such as Stefan Grossman. John Prine and Bob Dylan. And, once he'd jumped from the rigidity of classical music to the freedom of improvised jazz ("A lot of jazz overlaps into other genres; I listened to Keith Jarrett and Ralph Towner a lot."), it was to Dylan he returned.

"I didn't have anything to do with folk song for many years but when I was about 16 I went back to it. It started with American music and then I began exploring traditional music from Britain."

The journey quickly led to an obsession with the very soul of traditional song and the powerful influence of source singers like Jeannie Robertson ("I have a stack of her stuff"), Eddie Butcher and Paddy Tunney ("an incredible singer"). Absorbing their passion, his own reputation grew solidly as he started to play around the U.K. folk club scene and last year—after juggling a series of part-time jobs involving bar work, waiting tables and helping people with drug and alcohol issues—he finally

took the plunge and became a professional musician.

"It is going better than I could have hoped. It's a real privilege to spend a large part of my time playing music and I want to keep on doing it."

Fowl Play

Joel Fafard takes another leap forward with the release of Cluck Old Hen—largely a collection of revitalized vintage blues and roots. Roger Levesque provides a bird's eye view of the former Scruj McDuhk.

If you're curious exactly where the songs, the guitars, and the stories fit into the continuing evolution of Joel Fafard's music he's likely to say, "Me too". And the genuine surprise in his voice suggests that this unassuming virtuoso of rural roots styles has just come full circle to rediscover that he enjoys doing it all.

Concert audiences already know him as a consummate performer who puts his own stamp on Appalachian music and acoustic blues, but another set of listeners may find the man even more musically rounded than they knew when they check out his latest set of tunes on disc. *Cluck Old Hen*. Of course the title tune is a natural fit to match the ever-present barnyard fowls which have

long graced the covers of his previous records, graphics courtesy of his wife, painter Megan Mansbridge.

Over the rest of his dozen tracks Fafard brings his cunning expertise to early classics like Muddy Waters's I Can't Be Satisfied, Appalachian standards like Darling Cory and John Hardy, and Robert Johnson's Come On In My Kitchen, finding a tasty balance between elastic guitar chords, slide work and grainy singing. For good measure, he throws in a couple of contemporary favourites, Lyle Lovett's If I Had A Boat and Richard Thompson's 1952 Vincent Black Lightning, all featuring his wonderfully intricate guitar or resonator guitar, Richard Moody's violin and Gilles Fournier's acoustic bass.

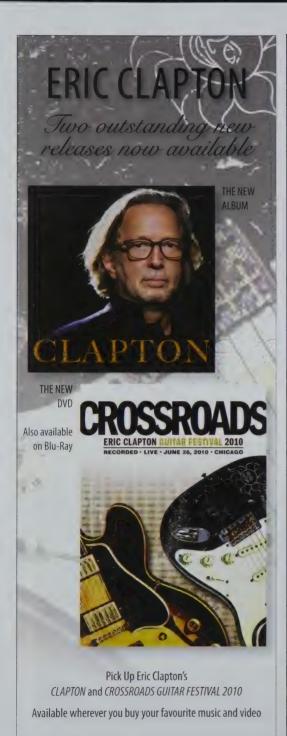
Covering Thompson's famous song involved a particular challenge.

"If you listen to different cover versions of that song my guitar might seem to be more like his but it's not. I did it in a different tuning that I think gives it a different character and flavour. I knew I had to do something different with it."

To close the album five tunes are reprised in rough bonus tracks with alternate arrangements for just voice and guitar. But however your taste leans the real story is that Fafard is on record playing and singing the stuff he used to reserve solely for gigs.

Whether he's covering classics or taking on original works, so much of the music





relates to his upbringing. Born in Regina, he was raised on the edge of the town of Pense, Saskatchewan, by two artistic parents, the best known being his father, the famous sculptor Joe Fafard. That's where he found his purpose and place.

"It's got to be the flattest place in Canada, between Moose Jaw and Regina, and I found that flat space was just like an empty canvas for the imagination. When I see it I get this soundtrack in my mind for a western. I think it comes from living in that space."

His parents had a good record collection and started taking him to the Winnipeg Folk Festival when he was 10. That first year left a big impression, too, after he witnessed sets from Stan Rogers and John Lee Hooker.

When he got his first guitar at 15 it was an electric to satisfy his rock'n'roll urges, but regular visits to the Winnipeg fest helped steer Fafard towards acoustic guitar by the time he was 19, and to make his first two albums, *Fierce Warmth* (1996), and *Farmer's Tan* (1999). Along the way, a few lessons with Saskatchewan guitar ace Jack Semple and a stint at Vancouver's Capilano College helped him shape his fingerpicking style.

On regular visits to Winnipeg, Fafard also came to know festival producer Mitch Podolak, whose son, Leonard, would invite him to join a band called Scruj McDuhk in the late 1990s. It was in that band—now The Duhks—that Fafard met violinist Moody, now a longtime loyal sideman in his solo efforts; he also credits McDuhk for introducing him to the joys of Appalachian music.

Following a short stint touring with McDuhk Fafard followed an impulse to go solo, and electric, and try rock'n'roll with the album *Head Smashed In*. But promoting the disc left him so disillusioned with the music business he almost left music completely. Then one day he got a letter from the Saskatchewan Arts Board explaining that he had been singled out for a recording grant. His wife told him if he was going to take a final fling at music then he should make the album he always wanted to make. Good advice.

"I knew the answer right away. I wanted to make an instrumental guitar record with Richard Moody on violin and Gilles Fournier on bass. I never expected it to go anywhere but it worked out so well I've made two more albums with them since."

Rocking Horse (2001), ...And Another Thing (2003), and Three Hens Escape Oblivion (2008) put Fafard and his trio on the map as a solid instrumental roots act, bringing critical raves and more notoriety, including nonminations from the Western Canadian Music Awards, the Canadian Folk Music Awards, and a Juno nomination for the last CD.

"I found I could express myself in great detail with just music alone. But it's funny how things come around. Once I took the pressure of singing off I realized how much I loved singing, and I started adding a few songs to my shows. Over the last 10 years I kept doing a few of these covers and people kept asking, 'What album is this one on?' I got tired of saying, 'None of them.' So this album seemed like the right thing to do."

If the vintage angle of his Cluck Old Hen project brings an interesting new wrinkle to Fafard's career he's wary of

planning anything definite around it. Either way, he puts in about 70 or 80 dates a year. He's toured Europe three times, taken the music to New Zealand, and California is in the offing. That's when he's not enjoying life with his wife and three kids on British Columbia's Sunshine Coast, their home for three years now.

"I would enjoy it if I could rest on my singing for a while but I don't know what the next record will be. It might be another vocal record because I really had fun with this. I like to stay focused, so it probably will be one or the other, but I've got some vocal ideas and some instrumental ideas down and I can't say where they will go now."



Classic Cubans

The fabled Cuban son combo, Septeto Nacional Ignacio Piñeiro, spent last fall on tour in Western Canada. Lark Clark went along to document their tales and triumphs.

Discipline, order, respect. Perhaps not the first words that come to mind when thinking about Cuban music. This band lines up at the tour bus on time. They fret if they're late for sound check. They don't eat before a performance. And after the show, they go to the hotel—to sleep. But then, travelling with Cuba's Septeto Nacional was a refreshing dashing of stereotypes.

Yes, a splash of rum adds heat to the show, and great dancers, both male and female, are brought up from the audience to show off onstage. But all-night sessions don't cut it when you have to be down at breakfast at 7:30 a.m. The group swims together like a school of fish.

For a band, being 82 years old is equivalent to a Methuselah's age. Septeto Nacional is now in its fourth generation of players, who speak about its founder, Ignacio Piñeiro, ("a good man") as if they had known him personally. ("He was actually a bricklayer, did you know?") Anyone who could write such great tunes must have been honourable.

So who is Septeto Nacional Ignacio Pifieiro anyway? Well, if you've heard Buena Vista Social Club or any salsa song, you've heard Septeto. Back in 1928 Piñeiro was a young habanero, itching to rock harder. He took the typical sextet lineup of the day and added a seventh man, a trumpeter. The bright, brash voice set the whole thing on fire, dancing on top of the locked-in groove of percussion and strings. Over the years bands got larger, but the septeto format, with its rhythmic mix of rumba and guaguance entwined with folkloric melodies, laid down a pattern for popular dance music—son—for years to come.

I asked the group's representative, Ricardo Oropesa, why Septeto Nacional would want to continue performing music dating from the 1920s and '30s. Speaking in Spanish, Ricardo replied that their repertoire is "part of the classic music of Cuba. It carries the values and traditions of our country. It's important for maintaining our unique Cuban identity."

Indeed. The determination to maintain that identity has sustained Cuba in its decades-long struggle with U.S. economic sanctions, through the collapse of Soviet support, through periods of abject hunger. And what "values ... of our country" does Septeto embody? Why, the God-given right to dance!

In performance Septeto Nacional doesn't take long to ignite the audience. They enter the stage dressed with class. Everyone sports a pin-striped or navy suit, shoes polished. Some wear a fedora or a typical Cuban slouch cap. They align themselves onstage with an assured dignity and launch into what they hope will become recognizable in North

America as their anthem: Echale Salsita. (Add a little salsa to it!), Ignacio Piñeiro's hit that added the word salsa to the musical lexicon. The number unwinds like a Cuban music box and sets up our ears for what's to follow: gorgeous runs on the tres (Cuban guitar), machine-gun bongos, three-part harmonies, and the moves of the group's rumbero frontman, Raspa.

Equal parts singer, dancer and comedian, Raspa is the only one not in regulation pinstripe. Wearing a tan suit with a gold-embroidered shirt, a white cap and white patent leather loafers, Raspa is a survivor of a way of being that embodied Cuban cool in the '50s and '60s. Offspring of the zoot suit era, they brought traditional santeria rhythms and dances, africano puro, out of the countryside and into the city. Their moves are sharp, asymmetrical, erupting unexpectedly and ending quickly, expressing one thing: the self-assured sexuality of the dancer.

At 70-plus, Raspa's voice is still penetrating and clear, his moves lithe and spontaneous, his vocal punctuations tinged with a mimicry that both mocks and embraces the people around him. (Myself included. His imitation of my Spanish, popped out as I boarded the tour bus, had us all in stitches.)

The central role that rumba plays in son is celebrated in a spiffy new CD recorded in Cuba to accompany the band on its international tour, *Sin Rumba No Hay Son*. Piñeiro felt that rumba was the salsa picante that formed the heart of his spicy offerings, and the band's current incarnation maintains

that rhythmic base with ardour.

Surprisingly, many of the songs in the band's current repertoire are new. Every member of the band contributes compositions. Naturally there are characteristic styles within the band—Augustin Someillan, the trumpeter, sets up the most wicked montunos, repeated grooves for dancing and improvising. The guitarist, Dagoberto Sacerio, writes lovely, lilting melodies. Yet despite the multigenerational gap in the band, the additional songs still fit well within the



style created by Piñeiro so long ago.

Which brings me to respect. Backstage one evening Ricardo asks me to get the theatre manager's signature. He hands me that night's set list. Each song is identified by title and composer, and at the bottom there's a line for the manager to affirm that that is, in fact, what was performed. "Es normal!" Ricardo kept repeating to my quizzical looks.

Turns out that when the band returns to Cuba, they must deliver the lists to a Cuban functionary, who will distribute royalties to the appropriate songwriters. The reverence with which Cubans hold composers is stunning, not to mention their acceptance of labyrinthine bureaucracies. "Es normal!"

The pendulum has now swung back— Septeto Nacional has just performed in the United States for the first time since the 1932 Chicago World's Fair, when they won a gold medal for their music and became an international sensation. A decade after Buena Vista Social Club revitalized a global appetite that had grown dormant, the band that has been there all along is getting their due.

Eighty-two years on, Septeto Nacional is still getting folks up out of their seats.

A Cut Above

Del Barber counts John Prine, Greg Brown and Townes Van Zandt amongst his songwriting heroes. And like them, Barber writes captivating narratives about real characters. Respect: Tom Murray.

We can do this by the numbers if you like.

They are impressive by any measure: in just a couple of years, Manitoba's Del Barber can account for somewhere around 300 gigs across Canada as well as two full-length albums, 2009's Where the City Ends and 2010's Love Songs for the Last 20. How he found the time to record them is anyone's guess, but his fecundity is remarkable. In a country swimming with folkies bearing acoustics and claiming road knowledge, Barber is the authentic deal, and those in the know are well aware of this fact.

"I keep getting calls from agents and labels wanting information," the 26-year-old says with a certain mystified tone from his home in St. Norbert, a suburb of Winnipeg

Win The Once's self-titled debut disc



The Once took their name from a dictionary of Newfoundland sayings. It means: "in a short while" or "as soon as possible". This trio has certainly made its mark in a relatively short period of time. Propelled by gorgeous harmonies, their wonderful self-titled debut disc won Traditional Album of the Year and New Emerging Artist of the Year at the recent Canadian Folk Music Awards. "Gem-like maritime

music," said the Globe and Mail.

And the nice people at Borealis Records have very kindly provided us with six copies. To win one, answer the following questions correctly and e-mail them to penguinegs@shaw.ca. Put The Once as the subject. And please don't forget to include a mailing address and a proper contact name in order for us to forward your disc. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Good luck.

Q 1. Which member of The Once was born and raised in St. John's?

Q 2. Which member of The Once is also a stage actor?

Q 3. One of the members of Great Big Sea is part of The Once's management team. Which one?

Answers to Great Big Sea's Safe Upon The Shore contest are: Q1: Gold. Q2: Alan Doyle. Q3: Gallows Pole.

And the winners are: Trish Deperreault, Edmonton, AB: Dennis Churchill, Victoria, BC: Carolyn Loveless, Kingston, ON; Mary Hietkamp, Tillsonburg, ON: Jennifer Dooks, Dartmouth, NS; Kenyon Wallace, Toronto, ON: that Barber characterizes as being "like a small town, with it's own pharmacy and post office."

"They want me to do up a spreadsheet of the gigs I've played, so that they can look at where my 'markets' are. The thing is, half these gigs were terrible, where I barely got paid or nobody was there. I really don't quite know what to do here."

If he seems bemused at the spurt of attention he's been getting, or at the idea of talking about markets, Barber should also know that he'll have to get used to it. He's just a little too self-effacing; a few poorly attended gigs don't really tell the story here. Where the City Ends was nominated for a Western Canadian Music Award for Roots Recording of the Year, and he's been featured at both the Winnipeg and Brandon Folk Festivals. Radio, the printed media and bloggers have been fulsome in their praise for both of his recent albums.

Barber seems grounded enough to take the attention with a grain of salt. He's certainly put time into developing his songwriting voice, with desultory attempts at touring ("You know, that Kerouac bullshit; it wasn't serious") while living in Chicago and a short stint in Calgary before finally making a serious attempt at music as a career, not just a sideline.

"I kind of fell into it, though," he admits.
"There were some demos I did with a friend
that I was selling a number of years back,
but at some point I thought, 'Maybe I actually have a record here'. After I worked in
forestry for the summer I just went for it."

Barber is a fan of narrative music, where the song tells a story, and his own music falls into the same category. Love Songs for the Last 20 in particular is about his feeling for the province he lives in, a love letter of sorts to his home. That he spends so much time away from it deepens the irony of the songs contained therein, but then we all know what they say about absence. When talk turns to a well-known "new country" group in his area who make similar claims about their music as romantic arrows aimed at Manitoba, Barber is less than impressed.

"Yeah, I'm not the biggest fan," he rejoins. "The pop-country music you hear on the radio now is all illusory; it sounds like it was made in a laboratory. I think that maybe we have different songwriting influences."



"People are afraid to write real stories now. It's as though it's passé, but it's what my heroes all do. That's actually what I'm setting out to do, to be part of that tradition."

- Del Barber

This is probably true. He names Springsteen, Greg Brown and John Prine as singersongwriters that he's unabashedly a fan of, and nods at Gram Parsons and Townes Van Zandt as artists he's obsessed with at points. Or rather, he's been obsessed with *Be Here To Love Me*, the documentary about Van Zandt's life. Not because the darkness described finds any hold on his own life, but because of "the way Townes carried himself"

"I used to watch that movie six or so times a week," Barber admits. "I don't do that anymore, but for a time it was something I watched religiously. I wasn't attracted to his story because of his negative lifestyle; I guess that watching it was catharsis for me. For a time I used to work in a rehab centre that my mom ran, so I grew up seeing addicts, and it had no interest for me. I mean, I'm no puritan, but to see family after family screwed up because of drugs takes the appeal out of it."

If Barber has drawn anything from Van Zandt it's his commitment in the moment to the songs that he sings. This is an unquantifiable resource to draw on, something that can't be taught but only learned over, say, 300-plus shows. Barber points to Brown and Prine as examples of musicians who

can pull this off in every show; he also, when pressed, can deliver himself of an impressive rant on the inchoate nature of today's music, in whatever genre.

"Purity of intent" is a phrase he uses, and for a twenty-something he's got a finely developed sense of where it's all gone wrong, from irony-loving post-rockers to acoustic-guitar-holding folkies merely spinning their wheels onstage. Growing up solidly working class may have developed it, or maybe just having good heroes to study, but Barber really does say what he means, and doesn't mince words while doing it.

"You know. I love indie rock, and I love that vibe about getting excited at shows, I get worked up by the choruses in an Arcade Fire song, but I also feel as though they can be so damn vague. I used to love Wilco, but then I read an interview with [Wilco singer-songwriter] Jeff Tweedy where he said that he writes lyrics by pulling out different lines from different poems that he's written. Well, that's how those songs sound, actually.

"People are afraid to write real stories now," he says, with some passion. "It's as though it's passé, but it's what my heroes all do. That's actually what I'm setting out to do, to be part of that tradition. Indie rock is fragmented, and so is the narrative. I get it, I really do, but the songs that I write are meant for more people than that. Maybe it's because I've worked lots of manual labour jobs, but I want to write songs that a guy who works on a farm can enjoy as well as someone who has a university degree."



Before The Flood

A pensive character, that Ray LaMontange. And a seriously talented one, too. Despite bizzare comparisons to the likes of Meg White or John Lee Hooker, LaMontagne remains a unique artist in every aspect—singing, songwriting and, indeed, philosophy. And Colin Irwin considers LaMontagne's latest release, God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise, extraordinarily good.

ay LaMontagne is not a man for ribald banter. Ask him a question and you can almost feel him wincing as he circles it cautiously, assessing every syllable like it's an unexploded hand grenade, as if seeking its hidden agenda, before pondering his painstaking reply. "Yes ... good ... I think ... All. Good. All. Of it." I wouldn't mind but I've

only asked him how he is...

Interviewing Ray is a chastening yet refreshing experience for an old hack schooled on 300 mile-per-hour self-promotion machines and vacuous soundbites. Clearly not at ease when confronted by a nosy interrogator-he tends to keep interviews to a mininum-his meticulous mode of reply perhaps mirrors his meticulous approach to music. An approach reaping rich awards on his newest and rootsiest album, the splendidly titled God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise, which also marks a significant leap of faith as he abandons the safety net of Ethan Johns, producer of his first three albums, to become the master of his own destiny

There's a familiar, elongated pause as he absorbs the question about producing his own album but, answering softly and v-e-ry s-l-o-w-l-y, makes no attempt at flannel.

"Ethan has his own way of making a record, and after three records I'm familiar with that and wanted to approach it differently and decided to do it myself. I like the freedom. And I enjoy being in control."

A sigh, another pause, and you're poised to jump in with the next question, but he's on a roll now. "I'm a perfectionist." Pause. "And a control freak." Not a trace of irony. "It's nice to be able to indulge that."

Ray LaMontagne is an unusual artist, in pretty much every aspect of singing, songwriting and, indeed, philosophy. I'd assumed that the story of him walking out on his job in a shoe factory at the age of 22, intent on becoming a singer after hearing *Treetop Flyer* by Stephen Stills, was apocryphal, but he swears it's true and there's such a steely deliberation about his whole attitude it's easy to believe.

He's 37 now with a strongly defined, melancholic style and you wonder how, why or where he was drawn so intently to a rootsy folk music that now tends to be simplistically referred to as Americana. Later in our conversation he becomes

positively animated discussing his love of heritage artists from a variety of genres, from Led Zeppelin ("when I first heard them I just thought, 'My God'") to Sonny Boy Williamson ("he plays harmonica like Jimmy Page plays guitar and his lyrics are so witty"), Bob Dylan, Howlin' Wolf, Stan Getz. Miles Davis...

With most people you might look to an early exposure to roots, folk and blues and his parents' record collection, but. LaMontagne's background isn't that straightforward. His dad was a musician, but left home when Ray was still tiny and he has little recollection of him.

"I know he had a band called Jack but I had no relationship with him—he was in my life for such a short time. I don't even know what sort of band he had—I imagine it was a rock'n'roll band but I don't know."

Ray was born in Nashua, NH, but moved constantly around America during his childhood as his mother, with six kids to tend, travelled constantly seeking work trying to make ends meet. Prospects for the young Ray weren't good and he admits there were a few scrapes along the way until they were living in Maine at the time of his famous encounter with Stephen Stills and a dramatic new direction appeared in front of him. He wrote and recorded a batch of songs and a demo eventually scuttled into a music publishing house, which snaffled him up and put him in a studio with Ethan Johns.

He's not one to debate the inner meaning and motivation of specific songs but if we can draw any literal clues about his background and thoughts of that period, Old Before Your Time, a track from his new album, may provide them: "I was raised up poor and I wanted more and maybe I'm a little too proud | In looking back I see a kid who was just afraid | Hungry ... and old before his time," he sings country-style over a tinkling banjo.

Yet the combination of his hoarse, yearning voice and charged, soulful songs coupled with his Jesus looks and impassioned live performances ultimately projected his music into the public arena. Grand names like Van Morrison and Tim Buckley were quickly invoked to describe him and, picked up by RCA, his debut album Trouble was quickly acclaimed. Helped by a TV ad, the emotional title track—with

its message of redemption and an intensity worthy of gospel music—became a major hit single all over the world and turned LaMontagne into a reluctant star.

You imagine RCA wanted more of the same but Ray was never one to play the game and his second album, *Till the Sun Turns Black*, was a different kettle of fish entirely. The gritty country-blues undercurrent of *Trouble* was followed by a more sullen, introspective sound decorated by fragile strings with jazzy interludes and belligerent horns, marking his card as a wilfully independent and slightly idiosyncratic individual.

This was confirmed by his third album, Gossip in the Grain, with impassioned vocals that got him compared to everyone from Sam Cooke and John Lee Hooker to Canned Heat and the Rolling Stones and, somewhat bizarrely, included Meg White, a surprisingly tender tribute/love song to the White Stripes drummer ("Meg White, you're alright, In fact I think you're pretty swell / Can't you tell?") What Meg herself made of it isn't on public record but, aside from confirming his admiration for White Stripes, proved again you can never second guess LaMontagne.

Which brings us to his "control freak" album, God Willim' & The Creek Don'r Rise, with his regular touring band the Pariah Dogs (Eric Heywood, electric guitar; Greg Leisz, acoustic guitar, banjo and pedal steel; Jennifer Condos, bass; Jay Bellerose, drums), recorded at his home studio in just five days. Five days he'd spent months and months preparing for, sweating over and fretting about as, in minute detail, he prepared everything for his first venture into self-production.

"It wasn't done without some anxiety," he says, with the merest glimpse of humour. "I had a clear idea of what I wanted to do, thought I could produce the record myself, and it was the right time to do it. But I knew I had to have my shit together. I spent months thinking about it, getting the songs together. I didn't feel completely alone—I had a lot of support from the band. We are all really close."

Did you find it difficult to lay down the law to the band ... you know, telling them to do something again if they haven't got it right?

"No. You just have to be very respectful

to everyone's creativity. There are ways of telling someone that you're not really digging what they're doing. Generally you just have to nudge them in the right direction but give them the freedom to bring their own voice to it. Five days to record an album is fast and it wouldn't work for someone like Radiohead or Coldplay but it worked for us. I had all my ducks in a row and the whole album in my head—all we had to do was go and make it."

He is justifiably proud of it, but what of those long, lonely months preparing the groundwork beforehand? You imagine him locked in a darkened room, living like a hermit, trapped in his own head, carving out reflective songs like Are We Really Through, This Love Is Over, New York Is Killing Me, Like Rock & Roll And Radio—such minimalist desolation you fear for his state of mind.

"I go to an interior place," he says of the writing process, "but it's not necessarily a bad place and it can be cathartic. It can be nice, especially when it's flowing. There's no better feeling than losing all sense of time when the writing is happening and you suddenly realize six hours have passed and you have been somewhere else. It's a beautiful process. But it can be a bitch



NEW FROM COMPASS RECORDS GROUP





PETER ROWAN BLUEGRASS BAND LEGACY

"Whether it's his stint as Bill Monroe's guitarist, or a successful run with Old and in the Way, for Rowan, these moments—all the collaborations and events—add up to a

collective legacy, and he's paying tribute to it with his forthcoming album, appropriately titled, Legacy." —The Boulder Weekly

With special guests Del McCoury, Ricky Skaggs, Tim O'Brien, Gillian Welch and David Rawlings. Produced by Alison Brown.



ALISON BROWN QUARTET

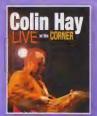
"Like James Taylor's voice or B.B. King's guitar, Alison Brown's banjo is an instrument possessed of a unique sonic signature and an inescapable beauty." —*Billboard Magazine*

Filmed at Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music, LIVE AT BLAIR showcases the virtuosic Alison Brown Quartet on a riveting

set of the group's best loved compositions. Featuring a guest appearance from multiinstrumentalist **Joe Craven**, this is the GRAMMY-award winning artist's first live DVD recording in a 15 year career that spans eight albums.







COLIN HAY LIVE AT THE CORNER

"He's got the same familiar voice, the same charming smile and a legion of loyal fans." —The Baltimore Examiner

Former Men at Work front man Colin Hay is one of the most engaging live performers on the circuit and this concert DVD captures Colin and his band at their best. Filmed at the legendary Corner Hotel in Melbourne, Australia, *Live at the Corner* features Men at Work hits and fan favorites from Colin's

solo career interspersed with his legendary storytelling. The DVD features over 2 hours of music plus bonus interview segments.



LUKA BLOOM

"That he scales such emotional heights with just his voice, a guitar and a bagful of heartfelt songs makes Bloom's achievements even more remarkable." —Hot Press

Revered Irish singer/songwriter **Luka Bloom** looks back on his career by creating vibrant new versions of some of his most notable songs. The result is a refreshing storytelling opus that highlights Bloom's affecting vocals and the immediately identifiable guitar style he's made his own since the late 1970's.



if a song is elusive ... I spent hours and hours or whole days sometimes sitting in a room waiting for something to be revealed. A bridge or a verse or something. Ten, 12, 14 hours in a room until I've wanted to blow my brains out. I'd set a deadline for recording and had everything booked, so when it gets to that point it can be stressful..."

Dear Lord, no wonder some of the songs sound so dark ... sounds like you were in a bad place...

"No. The songs dictate the emotion and the melody stirs it up. I sift through melodies until something jumps out and I will follow it. There are certain songs like that which aren't connected to me at all. *This Love Is Over* connected to me personally. Or *Are We Really Through*. I like that one. There are some nice, unexpected melodic turns in it. What's important is that the emotional core is honest. You can't fake that, especially live. You can have a really well-written song but if it's not true people will see through it. There's truth throughout this record. It may not be literal truth to my life, but it's still truth. Some of the songs are closer to my personal truth than others but I don't strive for that. You can't separate yourself from your whore."

Hang on, did he just say whore? I do believe he did and there's the merest hint of a giggle from Ray to acknowledge it, too.

When he announces that *God Willin'* & *The Creek Don't Rise* is the best batch of songs he's ever written, it's not a statement that can be dismissed lightly.

"I'm my own worst critic," he says. "There's not a critic who's ever said anything worse than I've said about myself. I tell myself things are crap all the time and I don't worry about other people's opinions because they all have their own references. But I have this inner critic and he's a bastard, a real so of a bitch. But it's good to have a harsh editor. I'm so hard on myself I know I can be proud of anything that passes my own gauntlet. I have a lot of corpses of half-finished songs..."

He has no time for genre classification—he regards himself merely as a songwriter—but happily accepts the rootsier end of the market as his primary field of play.

"That's just the kind of music that speaks to me and got to me early on. It feels natural to me and the music I make. It doesn't feel forced or contrived. I just write the songs I'm drawn to writing. I couldn't make a rap record although I can see the genius in that. I'm just not schooled in it. Occasionally I'll hear an electronic piece of music and think that's genius, too, but it would be unnatural and contrived for me to attempt anything like that."

"I've always been drawn to people like Neil Young and Crazy Horse, White Stripes, Black Keys, Willie and Waylon. Willie Nelson's *Red-Headed Stranger*... that's so, so brilliant. They made that record in three days. I've been wanting to make a record with that approach for a long time. I wanted to do it on the first record but it wasn't possible, but with the musicians I have now the time was right."

At the end he wishes me well and thanks me for my time. He may be considered strange by some people's perceptions, but the man is a gent. And *God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise* is extraordinarily good.



Garth Hudson

The Penguin Eggs Interview



or Canadian musician Garth
Hudson, the days of playing
the Yonge Street strip in Toronto—tearing it up behind Ronnie
Hawkins with fellow Hawks Robbie
Robertson, Levon Helm, Rick Danko
and Richard Manuel—date back
almost a half-century.

Those days were the source of many spellbinding stories revolving around a ground-breaking crew of musicians who would head Stateside and eventually perform under the banner of The Band, following a stint backing, collaborating and recording with Bob Dylan.

Hudson's signature sounds, created with an arsenal of keyboards and saxophones, stand at the core of a body of work that has been revered by numerous generations, since songs like The Weight, This Wheel's On Fire, Get Up Jake, Up On Cripple Creek, The Shape I'm In,

and The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down wafted out of rural upstate New York in the late '60s.

Drawing on everything from his love of classical composers, such as Bach and Mozart, to the dynamic turns found in pieces that had accompanied vaudeville and circus shows, to "fills from hymns", Hudson served up a kaleidoscopic of sounds that have never been replicated. His stately organ playing on Genetic Method and his achingly beautiful sax solo on Unfaithful Servant were just two of many moments where the spotlight sought out Hudson.

Since the last page of the final chapter of The Band was written, with the death of Rick Danko just over a decade ago, Hudson has worked on film soundtracks and released a handful of solo albums combining original pieces with

adventurous interpretations of tunes from sources such as The Grateful Dead.

Over the years the musician has made contributions to dozens of various projects. Michelle Shocked, Don Henley, Four Men and A Dog and Tom Petty being just a few of the artists who have enlisted Hudson's talents. He was also a member of a short-lived group called Burrito Deluxe in the first few years of the new millennium.

At 70 years of age, now, he and his wife, Maud, continue to live in Woodstock, NY, and his latest project is Garth Hudson Presents A Canadian Celebration of The Band. Produced by Hudson, the recording covers 18 songs and features his playing on every track.

Questions by Peter North.

Garth, how long had you been thinking of producing a project that celebrated the music of The Band in a different context?

My first thoughts of presenting some of these pieces with other artists came to me not long after *The Last Waltz*, so 1977. Everyone in The Band had their own craft and we were all specialists of sorts.

So I was thinking about some of our contemporaries when the guys all went off to do what they had to do, and I was living in Los Angeles at the time. I was doing some shows with friends like Jo-El Sonnier, the crown prince of Cajun music. We were representing his culture and we are both accordion players. I was hearing Band pieces being represented by other cultures. I could see myself running all over the world with two microphones and a deck recording Polish accordion players from the northeastern U.S. to Serbian accordion players and Spanish musicians. I was looking at translations of lyrics for a while. Those were the first ideas I had about re-working



Band songs.

What was the segue that took you from there to getting Garth Hudson Presents A Canadian Celebration of The Band underway?

I was working on *The Musical History* box set of The Band that was released in 2005. One of my jobs was to go through material from the vaults and figure out who was playing what. Then I began to listen closely to what I consider curiosities and that set us on this course. We liked the idea of asking Canadian artists to participate and my wife, Maud, started to investigate who was available.

Bruce Cockburn, The Sadies, Neil Young, Great Big Sea, Cowboy Junkies, Mary Margaret O'Hara, Hawksley Workman, The Trews are just a few of the artists who made themselves available. You chose to kick off the album with Forbidden Fruit from the Northern Lights—Southern Cross album, which I guess is one of those "curiosities", as performed by Toronto gospel bluesman Danny Brooks. How familiar were you with Danny's work?

Well, I had played with Danny and some of those musicians about 10 years ago in a studio session or two. Danny really liked the lyrics to Forbidden Fruit and did a really nice job. When I listen to the words

I can imagine a young person in trouble, could be from any town in North America—Champagne, Illinois, or Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan—any of those small Western Canadian towns with exotic names that we used to hear on the weather reports when I was a kid, places like Medicine Hat.

Bruce Cockburn, with Blue Rodeo and yourself on keys, put a beautiful spin on *Sleeping*, which first appeared on *Stage Fright*; did Bruce suggest that was the piece he wanted to sing?

No, we picked it for Bruce. We made all the decisions on pairing artists with songs, but I don't think there was ever any doubt in our minds that Bruce would want to do *Sleeping*. He changed a few chords, and people have suggested that it is a great Bruce Cockburn vocal performance, one of his best in recent years.

I think pairing Bruce and Blue Rodeo worked very well. My first introduction to the guys in Blue Rodeo was in 1989 when The Band was inducted into the Juno Hall of Fame and they performed. They were a young band then. I've had the pleasure of seeing Bruce perform at the Bearsville Theatre here in Woodstock where I live.

You played a major role in creating one of the most timeless and much-loved bodies of work of the last century. Are there times when a Band song that you've played and listened to thousands of times

suddenly speaks to you in a new way?

More than anything I listen for anything I might find embarrassing as far as a lyric goes or something that might sound elitist, but can't say that I have in these songs.

I do get reminded of the old times occasionally and about what the technology of the day was when The Band first recorded some of these songs, how we experimented, what some of the effects boxes Robbie [Robertson] was using. That leads me to be reminded of certain moments I hadn't thought of in years. I always hear my good friend Rick Danko say, "You got a minute".

What I've been doing for the new album is the post-release listens. Listening to the recording really loud from one end of the house and then listening at a really low level. But I find the most interesting listens are in the car; it's a good driving record.

The Trews are one of the younger acts on A Canadian Celebration of The Band. The Trews ended up recording Move To Japan, which is from the Jericho album of 1993, which to my mind has been overlooked and underappreciated. It was nice to see one of your "curiosities" came from that album.

Thanks. Once again it was Maud who found out about The Trews and introduced their music to me and it was her idea for them to do *Move To Japan*, which Levon sang on *Jericho*. It's not a really well-



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known Band song. They were a lot of fun in the studio and well prepared. There were other songs from that era considered but as is always the case when you are making a record, things get left behind.

There are a number of performances here we could talk about, but off the top of your head what is another track that immediately comes to mind as a superior interpretation?

Chantal Kreviazuk's is moving and special, and she is a gifted pianist and singer. *Tears of Rage* is a complete performance, no overdubs required. It was one example of a performance and recording coming together very easily.

Your identifiable keyboard playing and arrangements are a big part of the foundation of this recording, but I find it peculiar that not one track features any horn playing from you.

I did record some horn parts for a few of the songs but was just never satisfied with my performances or playing, it's that simple. It was largely technical reasons so it really ended up being a guitar record.

You continue to teach in the Woodstock area; what are some of the things you like to pass on that the layman can grasp?

I'm just really particular about what is good and bad. [He laughs.] I advocate becoming familiar with the seven deadly licks. [Another laugh.]

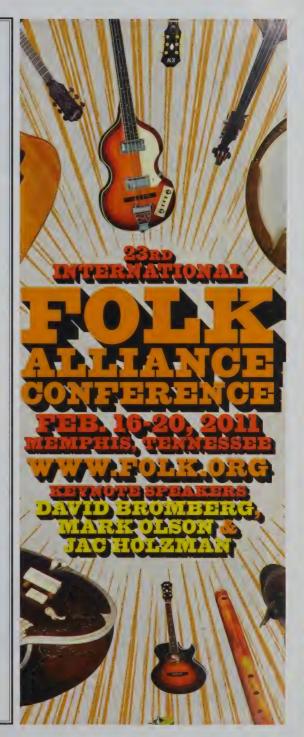
I suggest you get to know schmaltz and corn—the theatricality of music—that's what I grew up with as a kid, playing dances. Listen to the choice of words and the melodies of The Band era; I've studied them extensively and continue to study them.

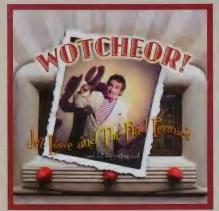
Do you have much contact with Levon Helm and Robbie Robertson?

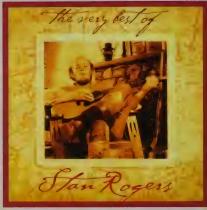
Robbie calls from time to time but Levon and I both live in Woodstock. It's just so amazing to see what is happening for Levon these days, from the reception to the recordings to the awards. When Levon built that barn and studio I don't think he ever envisioned that it would be as successful as it is. The Midnight Ramble series is doing so well; I've done it and it really is something, it's great.

Are there any plans for a live performance of Garth Hudson Presents A Canadian Celebration of The Band?

We're putting together a gala celebration for the spring in Toronto with a number of the artists who are on the recording. I'd also like to take it right across the country, and how about if we do it by train?



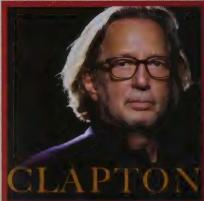












"Relaxed. Confident. Self-assured. It's the best Clapton in a long while."

- Eric Clapton Page 47

"An old cowboy ought to be on familiar terms with the phrase "money for old rope". *The Long Trail* certainly brings that old adage to mind."

- Ian Tyson 59



Stan Rogers

The Very Best Of (Fogury's Cove Music)
Herein lies a collection of some of the most influential folksongs ever written in this country. The very fact that Stan Rogers's Barrett's Privateers frequently shows up as "trad arranged by..." alone proves testament to his tremendous talents. Before his tragic death in 1983, Rogers transformed folk music in this country and gave it an appeal that transcended its conventional club and festival

Furthermore, his songwriting inspired dozens of musicians and singers: James Keelaghan, David Francey, Spirit of the West, Great Big Sea ... the list goes on and on.

audiences.

Graced with a glorious baritone, an ear for a breathtaking melody, an eye for the universal poetry in everyday life, and a massive, mercurial personality, Rogers had all the attributes of an engaging live performer. And he surrounded himself with compassionate and gifted working musicians, the likes of his brother Garnet Rogers, David Woodhead and later Jim Morrison. Together they criss-crossed North America as fiercely independent artists long before the term indie grew into a buzzword.

The Very Best Of, compiled by Rogers's wife, Ariel, and his producer, Paul Mills, offers pretty much, well, the very best of Stan Rogers. As with all compilations, it might not include personal favourites-the omitted Puddler's Tale from the posthumous From Coffee House to Concert Hall a case in point. And you can argue until the cows come home about the omission of Rogers's thrilling take on Archie Fisher's Witch of the Westmoreland, a consistent live show-stopper. Still, at 16 tracks, it's a comprehensive collection and one that clearly documents how Rogers's inspirational insights evolved from the numerous nautical themes of his early albums to the agrarian and industrial topics later refined as his tours expanded across the Prairies.

His music, too, gradually evolved from the largely acous-

tic base that launched Fogarty's Cove (1976) to the lavish orchestral arrangements featured on the tracks included from From Fresh Water (1984).
Whatever, 30 or so years on, such staples as The Jeannie C, The Field Behind The Plough, Northwest Passage, Barrett's Privateers, Forty-five Years, The Mary Ellen Carter, et al still retain all of their immense inaugural appeal. File under essential Canadiana.

- By Roddy Campbell

Eric Clapton

Clapton (Reprise)

With 27-odd releases behind him, what does Eric Clapton really have to do to release yet another? Some might say "not much". And it wouldn't be wrong to conclude that, since about '84, that's about what he's done that stands out, with a few exceptions. At first blush, Clapton appears to be one of those "guests" albums that are fashionable when fresh ideas seem at a premium: Derek Trucks, J.J. Cale, Allen Toussaint and—oh, Slowhand—the

London Session Orchestra?

However, after a five-year "solo" hiatus, these players don't overpower the marquis in the slightest. Indeed, they raise his game. A truly eelectic mix, the dark and slippery, Doyle Bramhall-influenced *Travelin' Alone* hits hard, followed by the mellow, backporch feel of *Rockin' Chair*, as Derek Trucks makes a velvety-smooth slide contribution.

Not surprisingly, the J.J.
Cale guest turns are highlights—sounding more J.J.
Cale than anyone else—yet
Clapton surprises with his
gospel take on Snooky Pryor's
Judgment Day with standout
input from Kim Wilson's harp,
Walt Richmond's piano and the
seamless background vocals of
Terry Evans, Willie Green Jr.
and Arnold McCutter.

Full of more surprises, Irving Berlin's How Deep is the Ocean proves Slowhand to be the ultimate balladeer, in great voice surrounded by lush strings and Wynton Marsalis's trumpet. Blues fans will take heart with the full-steam-ahead attack on Little Walter's Can't Hold Out Much Longer, providing a solid Chicago fix, with thanks to Wilson's harp and Clapton's own stinging leads.

Yet the showstopper is found in Rev. Robert Wilkins's *Can't*





Hold Out Much Longer. Highly Cooder-esque, the guitars of Clapton, Cale and Bramhall and Richmond's piano steal the show. However, the horn-driven, N'awlins-styled arrangements demonstrate an adventurous Clapton, clearly up to the task of stepping outside his comfort zone. Relaxed. Confident. Self-assured. It's the best Clapton in a long while.

— By Eric Thom

Ron Hynes

Stealing Genius (Borealis Records)

Great Big Sea's Alan Doyle once commented, "If you want to see the history of the development of St. John's or the East Avalon, all you gotta do is know every Ron Hynes song."

So after 40-plus years of chronicling life through a Newfoundlander's eye it's not surprising to see the direction this album took. The title is apropos. Stealing Genius is a collection of songs that have been influenced by the writings of various Newfoundland authors, including Des Walsh, Michael Crummey, Al Pittman and Randall Maggs.

OK, a confession from me:

I'm an unabashed Ron Hynes fan. He is a Canadian treasure and not just a Newfoundland institution. For me he can do no wrong when he writes a song. So, of course, I love this album. It was a stroke of genius for Ron to apply his songwriting talents to other good writing.

I particularly loved his take on Terry Sawchuk, inspired by the collection Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems by Randall Maggs. Totally overblown and operatic in scale, the song paints a vivid picture of one of Canada's true hockey heroes.

Ron Hynes has added another important and highly entertaining addition to his already impressive body of work.

- by les siemieniuk

Eugene Ripper

Punks and Pushers and Notes from the Fast Folk Underground (Independent)

Eugene Ripper, a self-professed fast folk rocker, has released a collection of new and old tunes that begin with a catchy pop song, A Perfect Day in Hollywood, and quickly moves into the blues and roots realm with Punks and Pushers. The album is unique in its

organization—the songs are grouped by genre (rockers and rackets, ballads and bleeding hearts, and instrumentals). Go Van Gogh and Thought 1 Saw Her are raw, quick, acoustic rocker songs. The ballads and the instrumentals are well-crafted. Overall, Eugene Ripper has produced a skilful, enjoyable listen.

- By Phil Harries

Joe Louis Walker's Blues Conspiracy

Live on the Legendary Rhythm & Blues

Many are still recovering from last year's tour de force, Between A Rock and the Blues. This live treatment continues the momentum, augmented by a jaw-dropping list of special guests. With Walker as MC, the parade consists of Johnny Winter, Duke Robillard, Nick Moss, Kenny Neal, Tab Benoit, Tommy Castro, Watermelon Slim, Jason Ricci— and the list goes on. The quality of the sound is exceptional, give or take some of Walker's vocals.

Highlights are many: Lowell Fulson's Ten More Shows To Play with Kirk Fletcher features blistering guitar; Born In Chicago likewise threatens fire at sea as Nick Moss and Walker ignite, Jason Ricci's harp fanning the flames; an



extended version of Sugar Mama with Watermelon Slim makes the most of a slow-mo boil; while It's A Shame gives his own band (Linwood Taylor, guitar; Kevin Burton, keys; Henry Oden, bass; Jeff Minnieweather, drums) a chance to shine. With, as Walker says, egos checked at the door, he manages to merge this boatload of talent into tight focus yet not get lost in the shuffle.

Front and centre throughout, it's Walker's time and the listener is left wishing he could get lost at sea with this crew. It's a busy set but easily the incentive you need to start saving for a deck chair you can call your own. No matter what floats your boat, this is one high-seas conspiracy guaranteed to make the trip beyond memorable.

- By Eric Thom

Colleen Brown

Foot In Heart (Outside Music and Dead Daisy Records)

Edmonton's Colleen Brown is all sass and soul. With her Kate Bush styles and universal lyrics, it's matters of the heart that concern her most. Tales of the road, ex-boyfriends and new perfume, Brown is the sort of songwriter who taps into the threads that tie hearts together. She effortlessly sings about longing and sadness with a sense of hopefulness. Brown has a voice akin to a mug of chai tea. A touch spicy, yet pure comfort.

Ain't Got No Man (To Have Problems With) is an ode to those lonely hearts, championing the upside to being single. Now That I've Found You echoes Joni Mitchell with her wispy, somewhat dreamy confessions. The album's biggest track, Man, Woman and Child, has a sexy confidence that leaves listeners wanting to

stay the night. As she declares herself, sometimes she's a woman, sometimes she's a girl, but she's all femme.

- By Shannon Webb-Campbell

Mavis Staples

You Are Not Alone (Anti-)

From the opening electric guitar twang, I was back in church, getting happy. A shiver ran through me—was that Pops Staples? Enter Mavis Staples's warm, proud voice. Don't Knock, Just Walk On In, an upbeat tune written by her father, Roebuck Staples, and we're off, rejoicing in some of the best gospel and soul recorded in years.

Much has been made of the partnering here of Ms. Staples with Jeff Tweedy of Wilco. Kudos to Tweedy for standing back and giving the glory where it belongs. Guitar by Rick Holmstrom and Jeff Turmes provides a subtly rocking groove, while backup vocalists Kelly Hogan (Neko Case's band) and Nora O'Connor (Otis Clay, Neko Case) are rock solid.

Staples takes a tour through an array of gospel and soul styles, her powerful voice bringing out the emotion in everything she turns to. It's great to hear some a cappella quartet-style singing, echoing the quartets of the '30s, '40s, which led directly to the R&B and soul creations of the '50s and '60s. Mavis sings songs by Randy Newman, Allen Toussaint, Reverand Gary Davis, Little Milton, and two songs created for the album by Jeff Tweedy himself, which stand up just fine, thank you, within the collection.

This is not a retrospective.

Neither is it an update, bringing an older artist to a younger audience. It is pure Mavis, doing what she does so well, beautifully accompanied and set up to work her magic.

Hallelujah!

- By Lark Clark

Ken Whiteley

Another Day's Journey (Borealis Records)

If you're young and not sure where you've heard the name before, Ken Whiteley is a Canadian roots music legend. He has been a presence in the Canadian music scene since the days the Original Sloth Band in the '60s and has taken Canadian audiences on his journeys through jug band, gospel, swing and even children's music for years.

Something happens when you get to a certain stage in life. You're not done but you do tend to look back more often to figure out how you got to here. And that is exactly what



Ken has done on Another Day's Journey.

He has gone back to musical friends accumulated along the way and recorded some nifty tunes, in all his Whiteley style, with them. Among them are Maria Muldaur, Guy Davis, Duane Andrews, his brother Chris Whiteley, son Ben Whiteley, Les Paul's bass player Nicki Parrott, drummer Bucky Berger and pianist Joe Sealy. The journey's not over. It continues in mighty fine style.

— by les siemieniuk

Kat Danser

passin'-a-time (Independent

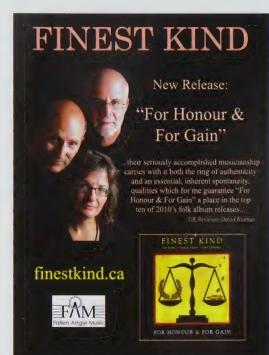
Can the spirit of Mississippi blues be found in Saskatchewan? You bet it can. This is one invigorating, well-crafted blues production featuring great songs, impassioned vocals, inventive rhythms and added flourishes from backup choruses and a flurry of complementary instrumentation. The only reservation is, with no offence intended, I thought I'd been listening to a man. That said, it's equally compelling and-bottom line-it's one stellar blues release by all and any measure.

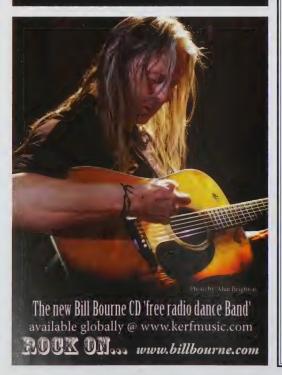
Playing a Weissenborn Hawaiian lap steel guitar, together with other six-stringed, slidefriendly instruments. Danser conjures the south with an authenticity seldom heard above the 49th. From the full-tilt aggression of Little Allis, featuring great slide and inventive percussive technique, together with exceptional backup singers (Sarah Dugas+) to Mista Preacherman, with harp, foot taps and powerful National Steel resophonic guitar accompaniment, Kat Danser provides the

From lazy blues like the title track to the old-time stringband sounds of No One Can Stop the Clock From Tickin', Danser is no one-trick mare. Producer Don Benedictson (bass), Christian Dugas (drums/percussion), John Ellis (lead guitars), Darryl Havers (keyboards) and guests play equal roles in adding the meat to this high-calibre production.

Ten imaginative originals with well-developed arrangements and lyrics that tie the past back to the present resulting in an inspirational recording that begs for an international audience. That this is Danser's third







release is a shock. An artist this good deserves serious recognition—far too good to be a secret any longer.

— By Eric Thom

Scott Cook

This One's On The House (Groove

Edmonton-based singer/ songwriter Scott Cook belongs to that fine tradition of travelling minstrels like Woody Guthrie - who he quotes in the liner notes - to this his second solo disc - Bob Dylan and Tom Waits. He's played in bands like The Anglers, The Smoking Cones and Lux and played in places like Taiwan but this solo incarnation seems to be where his heart lies. As he also says in the notes "it's getting harder and harder to sleep for free," but it's good to know there's still troubadours out there, travelling, talking and playing and writing songs about their adventures. It's a good solid disc he's produced himself with lots of good players, like Thom Golub, Dwayne Hrynkiw, Doug Organ, Bill Bourne, and Mike Sadava. Cook is definitely a player and writer to keep an eye on. Strong, decent stuff. - By Barry Hammond.

Mike Stevens and Matt Andersen

Piggyback (Busted Flat Records)

The combination of power-house harpist Mike Stevens and larger-than-life singer-songwriter Matt Andersen is a magical pairing. Stevens's adventurous playing meets Andersen's bigger-than-life more than halfway as they combine their skills towards having a blast. From blues to jigs, experimental to folk tunes and spoken word, it's a mixed bag but a barrel o' fun.

Think a pale version of Sonny & Brownie, with twice the energy. You sit up and take notice on Hold Me with Both Hands, a surprisingly intimate, gentle track that accentuates the power of a more subtle approach. Living In Sarnia-Stevens's hometown-adds another level of surprise as Andersen's latent Otis Redding fixation comes out loud and clear over top of Stevens's percussive use of harp, buzzing like a mayfly to dramatic effect.

If that wasn't enough, the higher-torqued Devil's Bride features a barrage of harp to Andersen's room-size pipes. Going Home is another highlight, combining spoken word to delicate acoustic guitar accompaniment as Andersen scores as storyteller, augmenting his tale with a beautiful chorus. The haunting strains of Stevens's harp and soft caress of Andersen's breathy vocal deliver on the title of Storms Rollin' In as Stevens's atmospheric, otherworldly notes work the room like a sorcerer

These are the best tracks but there's plenty of variety to hook a wide range of listeners. The best news is, as has been born out by Andersen's recent International Blues Challenge win and the reputation of Stevens's live shows, this record can only serve as preview and a tip of the iceberg for these two multi-talented players. Sure begs for a sequel.

- By Eric Thom

Nell Robinson

In Loango (Independent)

Until just a few years ago, Nell Robinson confined her singing to the car. Oh to have taken a long road trip with her. Robinson (actually a stage

name adopted from her beloved maternal grandmother) has one of the most refreshing voices in bluegrass. Their is more than a small hint of Emmylou Harris there (without the vibrato) and a dash of Hazel Dickens. And it's all from the heart. Her main inspiration is her grandparents' old home place near Loango, Alahama

Robinson has done a great job of choosing the songs and the musicians on this album. Most are obscure from the traditional American songbook, as well as new takes on standards such as *Trouble-Minded Blues* and *I Walk the Line*. She shows promising songwriting chops, too, on If Tears Could Heal, the happiest-sounding foot-stomper with the saddest lyrics.

Robinson, a resident of the Bay Area, is relatively new to professional music, but is confident enough to enlist two of the best bands in bluegrass — John Reischman and the Jaybirds and the Laurie Lewis Band.

And don't forget the bonus tracks by the Henriettas, a scratchy barnyard yodelling duo with her friend, Cary Sheldon with a '30s feel. Cluckin' good stuff, all of it.

– By Mike Sadava

Lvnn Miles

Fall For Beauty (True North Records)

With a successful and award-filled songwriting career, Lynn Miles has been an artist in full flight for the last decade. Fall For Beauty, her eighth studio album, featuring 10 new creations, flies even higher.

The songs range from folksy old-style country to light rock. Each song matches her poetic, melancholic, lyrical take on life to a lovely musical accompaniment. The main focus may be lost love but the songs come with a genuine feeling of her really having gone through it, yet making it relevant to our own lives as well. A fair trick, indeed, that lesser songwriters can't seem to pull off.

Lynn has been unflinching in putting herself out there emotionally on her past projects but Fall For Beauty seems the culmination of all that experience into one gorgeous-sounding and wonderfully written collection of songs. A highlight is an emotional duet entitled Good-bye with Jim Bryson. On the album, the singing is wonderful and the feelings evoked are palpable - but above it all, there's the writing. Check out the opening lines of Cracked and Broken: "Poets fall for truth and the soldiers fall for duty / And the girls fall for bad boys /And the bad boys fall for beauty / Leaves fall for winter and water falls on stones / And you're out there in the world / I'm here all alone."

Fall For Beauty is a wonderful, wonderful recording.

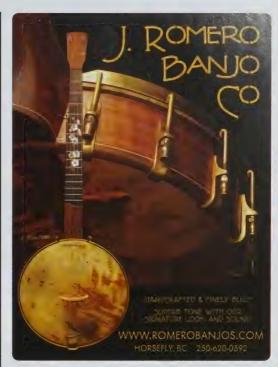
– by les siemieniuk

Willy Blizzard

In From The Cold (Rosewood Records

No, they don't sound anything like Silly Wizard. Willy Blizzard are a country-folk trio from Vancouver, fronted by principal songwriter John Hough. Although his voice appears a little weary at times, his lyrics are peppered with wonderful characters such as the trippy Lester and Lilly. Truly, nothing here resorts to cliché.

Indeed, the predominant theme throughout leans towards rambling. The titles of the tracks are something





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of a giveaway: Luke the Drifter, Santa Fe Train, The Next Little Town and the truly gorgeous Canadiana of Along for the Ride. There's also a few dodgy relationships: Halle ("You're a draft through my bedroom door / a leak in some dark place"), and deadpan humour: Mama Get the Hammer ("there's a fly on daddy's head"). While this recording won't change your life, it still remains a solid debut disc and one that bodes well for the future prospects of Willy Blizzard.

- By Roddy Campbell

Porkbelly Futures

The Crooked Road (Cordova Bay)

Originally formed as a blues band to pay tribute to Paul Butterfield, Porkbelly Futures has merged into becoming a drinking man's thinking band. An eclectic membership, its membership has included the late, great Paul Quarrington and Richard Bell, continuing with current members Stuart Laughton (guitar, harp, pedal/ lap steel), Rebecca Campbell (vocals, guitar), Chas Elliott (bass), Martin Worthy (vocals, drums) and new secret weapon Teddy Leonard (guitar). That these unlikely players (from the Canadian Brass and Toronto Symphony to Fathead and Fat Man Waving) would come together is exactly their reason for being, spring-boarding off significant friendships and love of playing while exorcising their favourite demons through the creative process.

The result this time around, their third release, finds them edging ever closer into roots territory but with a rock edge, compliments of Leonard's precise guitar contributions and a net result reminiscent of The Band and NRBQ, if not The Dead. That's range. Their versatility in rotating lead singers is



also the reason for their relative obscurity, as their identity as a band is ever-evolving. Which only means the rest of us should try harder to keep up.

Martin Worthy appears to be the key singer and, with a bit of an American burl to his voice, there's a laidback San Franciscan edge to his contribution.

The opening song I Ain't Leaving ('til the Wine's All Gone) is a great track, featuring notable guitar, harmonies and as good a rally cry as there is. The impact of Haughton's pedal steel is formidable.

Crazy Rain is another keeper while Campbell's contribution on The Difference You Make is less definitive. She clearly adds a tasty country element but her strength is greatest in her harmonic abilities. The best track is Coppertown, a loosefitting ballad that showcases the band's greatest strengths.

Special attention must be paid to their rhythm section, with Worthy's perky drumming giving the repertoire a hearty pop push. Despite the loss of Mr. Quarrington, there's little question he'd be proud of the promise Porkbelly Futures continues to show.

- By Eric Thom

Shooglenifty

Murmichan (Shoogle Recon

Shooglenifty are perhaps the Celtic equivalent of rock's "jam band": head-scratchin', booty-shakin', fuzzed-out instrumental rhythmatiz. And on *Murmichan* all sides of the band's sometimes schizoid musical psychology are presented in equal measure—making it easily their finest outing to date. There's not a weak tune in the batch this time and so the two-disc set flies by in an instant.

The record is bookended by the moody and memorable *The Road to Bled*, kicking off with the studio version and closing with a live version that gets even closer to the dark mysteries of the tune's title. There's a very much lighter (dare I say pop) feel to the arrangement of *The Dancing Goose*, and the band gets to rock out on *Cleiken the Dell* (among others).

But the absolute highlights for me are the remixes by DJ Dolphin Boy, evoking an appropriately after-hours vibe on *Up All Night* and getting all funky weirdness on *Dolphin's Delta Dotteral*. Rarely have the club and the traditional fucked with each other so perfectly.

- By Richard Thornley

Jez Lowe and The Bad Pennies

Wotcheor! (Tantobie Records)

First things first: wotcheor! was a common form of greeting in the northeast of England. It meant, "What cheer?" or "How are you?". That welcome inspired the title of the 1940s and '50s weekly series, Wot Cheor, Geordie, broadcast by BBC Radio from Newcastle (a Geordie is anyone from Newcastle). The program featured local comedians, storytellers and traditional folksingers and musicians.

And it played an influential role in creating initial local interest in the folk revival of the early '60s. And now, Jez Lowe and The Bad Pennies have recreated a "radio cabaret" based



on the BBC format, complete with crackling airwaves, jingles and hilarious adverts. While that gives the album a happygo-lucky touch of music hall, the overall recording features a wide range of emotions, from a rousing tribute to the fiddler Jack Armstrong (Barnstorming) to the bitter Judas Bus, about the strike-breakers during the 1984-85 U.K. miners' strike.

It's movingly interspersed by Louis Killen singing snippets of *The Blackleg Miner*. Of course, there's sentimentality here, too. Cue the lovely *Gramophone Dancing* and the Second World War homage *Back To The Land Girls*, as well as the funny and uplifting *The Ex-Pitman's Pot-Holding*—"the fastest pub quiz team in the land." And no doubt, the black humour of *It's A Champion's Life* will grow legs throughout the local

football fraternity. All in all, Wotcheor! is a hugely entertaining album full of delightful, inventive twists and turns. Some gadgie, yer man Lowe.

- By Roddy Campbell

Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters

Spread the Love (Stony Plain)

Ronnie Earl has no trouble spreading the love. His instrumental releases speak louder than most full-voiced productions could ever attempt to. At this point in his 20-release career, Earl is focused on paying tribute to the many key personalities and musical influences he's come to admire and respect: Kenny Burrell, Albert Collins, Harvey Mandel, Otis Spann, Duane Allman and Roy Buchanan.

Each of them is referenced here and Earl has little dif-

ficulty in paying them back, with interest. He and his accomplished, longtime band—David Limina (piano, B3), Jim Mouradian (bass) and Lorne Entress (drums)—play as if one, from their rendition of Albert Collins's *Backstroke* to, slowing things down, a more reflective *Blues for Dr. Donna*, a heartfelt tribute to Earl's wife.

Without the need to shift gears, Earl and Co. artfully excavate Kenny Burrell's beautifully funky Chitlins Con Carne as the indomitable Limina and his colourful B3 lays chase to Earl's every lead. Happy satisfies with the exotic precision of latter-day Santana, while Miracle conjures the ghost of Roy Buchanan, bathing it in warm light with each crying lead.

Limina's piano takes charge on Spann's Groove, locking



down a comfortable boogie, while Earl's nod to Duane Allman via a revisited *Skyman* provides eight of the most hypnotic minutes you'll ever spend between earphones as he immerses himself into a jazzblues cauldron, adding a pinch or two of the South.

Eleventh Step To Heaven is a reflective, almost spiritual composition that floats by as if on a different plane. Impassioned

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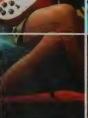
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playing is clearly Earl's stock in trade—and he's certainly built a career on unerring consistency.

Determined to repay some old debts might be the incentive here but the skill with which he's able to simulate, if not redefine, so many different styles into one achieves a stylistic height that only Earl has managed to attain.

- By Eric Thom

Bill Bourne

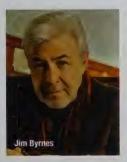
Free Radio Dance Band (Independent)

Bill Bourne might be showing more than a touch of grey in that long mane of his, but nobody can ever accuse him of standing still.

Over they years the Edmonton resident has dabbled in just about every kind of roots genre you can imagine — country blues, Celtic, flamenco, African, Icelandic folk — and always with conviction and credibility.

His 18th disc is yet another new direction for this folk veteran, and that is electric blues. This isn't Bourne's most cerebral work. In fact, it's raw, recorded live off the floor with an eclectic band that includes a Latin drummer, an African guitar player, a country-rock bass player and his son Pat cranking out crunchy solos.

All but two of the eight tracks are Bourne originals, and he gives new life to Bob Dylan's



Maggie's Farm and Doc Watson's Columbus Stockade Blues. Bourne gives the band a lot of room to rock, but, as usual on his recordings, the best instrument is Bourne's distinctive soulful voice.

-By Mike Sadava

Jim Byrnes

Everywhere West (Black Hen Music)

If there was ever a doubt that Canada was home to its own blues legends, this release—if not the last four—should seal the deal for Jim Byrnes. Surely the musical marriage of producer/multi-instrumentalist Steve Dawson to Byrnes's extraordinary way around a microphone is a formidable force.

Add in the brilliant session players who formed the backbone of Dawson's sensational Sheiks tribute (in which Byrnes played a role) and you've got Album of the Year material. Originally from St. Louis, expat Byrnes came by his influences honestly and can sound more black than any white singer should, which is his strong suit, in conjunction with the layers of sound Dawson builds around him on this blend of a dozen traditional, covers and original songs.

Lowell Fulson. Louis Jordon. Jimmy Reed and Robert Johnson, plus fresh goods from Byrnes and Dawson makes for some beautiful blues. The traditional No Mail Blues is undiluted fun, delivered with upbeat panache, driven by Daniel Lapp's wicked fiddle, Dawson's country picking and full chorus. Dawson's own Walk On is the feel-good song for our times, laidback and lazy but ripe with its positive outlook. The surprising Dixieland twist on Johnson's infamous From Four Until Late proves truly infectious, with delicious slide (Dawson) and jaunty



organ (uncredited). Byrnes's gruff take on Reed's Take Out Some Insurance On Me is worth it for his pronunciation of 'in-sho-ents', alone, not to mention its heartfelt message. Byrnes injects more spirit into the traditional spiritual He Was A Friend of Mine, completely convincing the listener it was his friend who died, to Dawson's lush accompaniment on Weissenborn and electric. The fall-down favourite has to be Jordan's You Can't Get That Stuff No More—the penultimate match to Byrnes's vocal talents-hilarious, with banjo, trumpet and tricone resonator providing slippery, sleazy embellishments. A work of art from a dynamite duo.

- By Eric Thom

Jayme Stone

Room of Wonders (Independent

Jayme Stone continues to search the world for great music, and he has come up with another great musical palette for the five-string banjo.

Stone's last two discs won Juno awards, and this latest effort is equally if not more deserving of accolades that should enhance the international reputation of this young banio master.

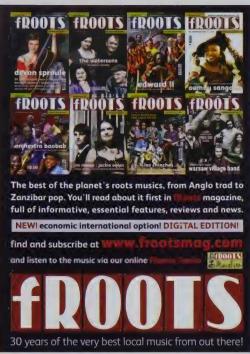
This time he has arranged

music based on folk dances from around the world and includes hornpipes, mazurkas, strathspeys and sambas, his influences stretching from Norway to Tunisia. Much of this music pulses to unusual time signatures, and while respecting the traditions, the music is as out-there and jazzy as that of his former teacher. Bela Fleck. And like Fleck did in the late '90s, Stone shows the banjo can even be used to play the works of J.S. Bach.

Stone is joined here by some of North America's finest acoustic musicians, including Casey Driessen of the Sparrow Quartet, Grant Gordy of the David Grisman Quintet and and ex-Punch Brothers' bassist Greg Garrison. I can't wait to hear what he comes up with next.

-By Mike Sadava







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Reviews

Tim Williams

When I Was a Cowboy (Cayuse Music) With a forty year career that stretches back to the folk/blues revival of the mid-sixties, Tim Williams is clearly a seasoned veteran. This latest collection of cowboy-flavoured songs was inspired by his time working on ranches in B.C. and Alberta in the mid-seventies and early 1990's. There are several Williams originals mixed with traditional tunes and such classics as Felipe Valdes Leal's Mi Ranchito, Freddy Fender's Mexican Rose, Leadbelly's When I Was A Cowboy, and Jimmy Rodgers's Peach Picking Time In Georgia. There's even a live track from CBC radio's Madly Off In All Directions show. Williams' picking and singing is accomplished and relaxed and he's still in fine voice. It would be a grand disc to play late at night around a camp fire with the stars above. Very nice stuff.

- By Barry Hammond.

Heidi Talbot

The Last Star (Compass Recordings)

This is the second release from the County Kildare native. I complained in these pages that the first one sounded too much like a Kate Rusby record. I'm glad to say that, even though this one is also produced by the ex-Mr. Rusby, John McCusker, it has way more identity. Ms. Talbot has a gorgeous, warm tone to her singing and an endearing way with a lyric.

Among the traditional songs, there are also new ones from Boo Hewerdine, Kris Drever and Karine Polwaert and co-writes from McCusker/ Talbot, as she makes her debut as a lyricist. As well as the aforementioned, there are appearances by such heavyweights as Phil Cunningham, Andy Cutting, Eddi Reader, Michael McGoldrick and Ian Carr. I am happy to say that Heidi Talbot's boat is finally coming in, and it is stocked with fine riches to boot.

- By Tim Readman

The Breakmen

Heartwood (Independent)

There's no longer a shred of doubt the Breakmen are out of the bluegrass ghetto. In fact, this, their third disc, would get them kicked out of most bluegrass festivals.

Yes, the Breakmen have gone electric. It's not quite the earthquake that occurred when Dylan played a Stratocaster at Newport. But take a listen to the opening track. Back to the Start, with the Hammond organ washing over electric guitar tracks and drums, and you'll think Highway 61 Revisited.

Despite electrification, there's nothing to fear for fans of this West Coast band. It's another album full of well-crafted songs, tight vocal harmonies and character voices. Great lines punctuate the disc, such as Archie Pateman's "A rambler who doesn't ramble is lost just the same."

And don't fret, the Breakmen haven't forgotten their roots. Lee Watson's *Show Me an Angel* sounds like the Louvin Brothers could have written it. Pateman's *From Here* is stripped down and features all three of the main singers taking turns at verses,

This album, produced in Whitehorse by Bob Hamilton, is a big step in a direction that should create many new Breakheads.

- ByMike Sadava

Charlie Louvin

The Battle Rages On (True North Records)

The latest disc by the surviving member of the Louvin Brothers and the cousin of John D. Loudermilk, is a collection of songs dealing with war. A veteran of both WWII and Korea, Louvin, predictably enough for someone his age and experience, mostly extols the American virtues of patriotism, love of flag and mothers, belief in God and apple pie on this collection of songs by artists like Merle Haggard, Tom T. Hall, Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb and others (as well as digging into The Louvin Brothers' repertoire). Bass player and producer Mitchell Brown surrounds Louvin with a supportive cast and the result is a disc with a classic bluegrass and country sound with a modern sparseness. Del McCoury and several others add backing vocals. Louvin's voice is ageing but, on this sort of collection of hearttugging songs about war, an elderly, quavering voice is an asset. It wouldn't be out of place in a Ken Burns documentary or Remembrance Day special (it was released on November 9th). One of the best tracks is the classic Weapon Of Prayer. It's maybe not the kind of thing you'd want to hear if you're an antiwar protestor (though he does cover Down By The Riverside with its chorus of: "Aint't gonna study war no more") but otherwise it

- By Barry Hammond.

The Shee

Decadence (Independent)

Another welcome release from this exceptionally gifted all-woman band. This second album picks up where the first left off. Their deft instrumental prowess and the power and harmony of their three lead singers grabs your attention, from the first notes of the opener, Troubles, to the last cadence of the self-penned title track. Flute, whistle, fiddle, electroharp, viola, mandolin and accordion weave in and out of their innovative arrangements. My personal favourite is the crazy instrumental Hand Ba' Breakdown featuring Shona Mooney's Jethart Candlemass Han' Ba', which fairly skips along, and its nutty companion piece Messi's Breakdown from the pen of Amy Thatcher. Another highlight is the arrangement for Eppie Morie, featuring great singing from Olivia Ross. The Shee met while studying on the folk music degree at Newcastle University and, as everyone knows, everything that comes out of that city is top class!

- By Tim Readman

Peter Rowan Bluegrass Band

Legends (Com

Progressive bluegrass giant Peter Rowan transcends mythical status with Legends as his lifetime of experience brings him full circle, resulting in one of his most powerful releases ever. What Rowan hasn't done for a bluegrass tune just hasn't been done—his schooling having embraced traditional. gospel-based bluegrass yet pushed out the boundaries of the genre through associations with David Grisman. Jerry Garcia and Vassar Clements.

From Bill Monroe to Hot Rize and Seatrain, Rowan has continued to evolve the category while holding dear its

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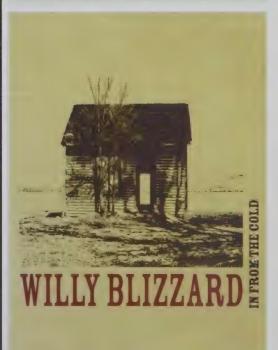
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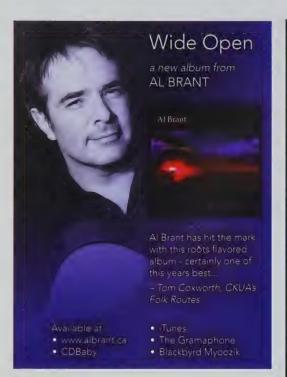
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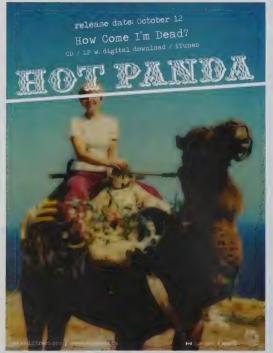
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tenets. His distinctive tenor is worn and weathered, yet still sweet enough to ensure rapt attention while wringing human emotion. From the rollicking pace of Jailer, Jailer to the slow simmer of Father, Mother, with its otherworldly harmonies-built on a foundation of having lived life and witnessed death-Rowan's charms are deep-set and lasting.

Mix in talented friends like Ricky Skaggs, Del McCoury and Gillian Welch and his seasoned bandmates - Jody Stecher (mandolin, vocals). Keith Little (banjo, vocals) and Paul Knight (bass, vocals) - and the party's just started. Joyful sounds abound, bringing fresh breezes to an age-old tradition, transforming that lonesome sound into very good company.

- By Eric Thom

Al Brant

Wide Open (Independent)

The title of this disc reflects Al Brant's attitude to life, music and stylistic influences. He nearly quit the music business a little over four years ago, after sixteen years of playing and touring both with bands and as a solo act. Since making the decision to continue he's been hired by the University of Alberta Hospital's Artists On The Wards program to play for patients, an experience he finds very rewarding. He received an honourable mention in the international John Lennon song-writing competition in 2003. He's also been involved in The Christmas Carol Project with other Edmonton-based musicians including Maria Dunn, Bill Bourne, Dale Ladoucer, Tom Roschkov. Terry Morrison, Ken Brown

and Kevin Cook. Bellstruck Productions Inc. in association with CHUM Television produced a televised version of the show, which aired on City TV, Access, A-Channel and Bravo! across Canada in December 2006. This new disc, produced by session bass player, Mike Lent, gives the listener a solid slice of Brant's music: sensitive, heartfelt and varied, from his own singer-songwriter mode to more rocky and funky fare, from a trombone section on Chasin' Nothin', to jazzy flute on Digital Girl, including a cover of the Allman Brothers' Come & Go Blues. It's a talented smorgasbord that deserves to be widely heard. Hopefully, the disc will help break his career wide open, too.

- By Barry Hammond.

Russell deCarle

Under the Big Big Sky (Fontana North

What a pleasant surprise: a solo disc from founding member of Prairie Oyster, bassist and singer Russell deCarle. With a little help from such well-known friends as Kevin Breit, Amos Garrett, Steve Briggs, David Wilcox and Jim Cuddy, deCarle stretches out and crafts a really nice showcase of bluesy/jazzy/gypsy/country-swing material with a slightly retro, acoustic feel. John Sheard (The Guess Who, and Dan Hill) does a great job on producing, with admirable help from engineer L. Stu Young (Prince, Ronnie Hawkins, Guns n' Roses, David Wilcox) and the disc sounds fabulous. With piano and vibes from Sheard and tasty solos from everyone, it's just such a relaxed sounding disc with such a nice feel to it we didn't want to let it off our disc player. If you want

to get mellow and comfortable you can't do any better than this. Did we mention how great the horn section of Chris Whiteley on cornet, Gord Meyers on trombone, and Coleen Allen on tenor and baritone sax is? Equally terrific are Drew Jurecka's fiddle solos. And, damn, if deCarle didn't write what should be a new Christmas standard in Blues For Christmas. If you're a Prairie Oyster fan, or even if you're not, you gotta latch onto this. Great disc!

- By Barry Hammond.

Caleb Klauder

Western Country (West Sound Records)

Caleb Klauder's singing voice is perfectly suited to his chosen style. His plaintive, mournful timbre resonates solid, authentic country without the sequins and Spandex.

Western Country is as comfortable as your favourite pair of boots, without a lick of artifice or pretense. There are hints of Hank, Dwight and Lester if you need audio cues.

About half of the dozen songs are originals and the rest are covers, including a twangy version of Satisfied Mind and the sprightly My Baby Came Back by the Louvin Brothers.

Meaning no disrespect by way of odious comparison, it's like listening to the scratchy but authentic and genuine songs of the 1950s and '60s but with better sound recording and reproduction, tighter harmonies that



are in key, and splendid playing by skilled musicians, especially the aching pedal steel.

Let's have some more, please.

– By Doug Swanson

Books

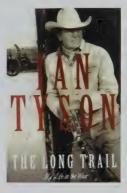
Ian Tyson

The Long Trial: My Life In The West Random House Canada, \$25.95

Review by Roddy Campbell An old cowboy ought to be on familiar terms with the phrase "money for old rope". The Long Trail certainly brings that old adage to mind. Truly, there's more insight into Tyson on Wikipedia than in the pages of this paltry autobiography. Then again, Douglas & McIntyre suffered the same fate when they hired the reputable Colin Escott to work with Tyson on I Never Sold My Saddle (1997). At least that offering printed the scores to his best songs.

Unlike, say, Keith Richards, whose wonderfully entertaining autobiography, Life, constantly reinforces his permanent passion for music, Tyson never ever envisages that same sense of wonder. And yet as part of the duo Ian & Sylvia, he was in the eye of the hurricane, in the heart of Greenwich Village as the folk revival took hold. They scored international hits with Four Strong Winds, Someday Soon and You Were On My Mind. Bob Dylan was a friend and contemporary who would change the course of popular music. They shared a manager in Albert Grossman, who also handled Peter, Paul and Mary, Odetta and John Lee Hooker. Heady times, for sure, but hardly worth documenting in any detail in The Long Trail, apparently.

Indeed, from his first introduction to Sylvia Fricker to playing Mariposa as Ian &



Sylvia in 1962 takes barely more than a single page, even less for his pioneering country rock experiment with the Great Speckled Bird.

But what's more disturbing about this memoir is the mean-spiritedness abroad on many of these pages. A noted curmudgeon.

Tyson grumbles his way through much of his career paying grudging or little tribute to those who helped him along the way. Adrian Chornowol, producer of Cowboyography, being a notable exception. Imagine mentioning Felix Pappalardi simply as our bass player. Pappalardi went on to produce all the trail-blazing albums by the supergroup Cream. Wonderful singers and musicians such as Cindy Church, Nathan Tinkham, David Wilkie and Mark

Koenig-who

all worked with Tyson as he reinvented himself as the predominant singer of cowboy and western songs—don't merit mention.

For all of that, over the course of almost 50 years, Tyson has consistently proven himself a resilient and immensely talented songwriter. The heart and soul of this iconic character, however, still remains a closed book.

People You'd Like To Know: Legendary Musicians Photographed by Herb Wise

Omnibus Press, \$34.95

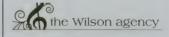
Review by Roddy Campbell New York photographer Herb Wise started his career as editor of Oak Publications—the company founded by Irwin Silber

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and Moe Asch of Folkways Records—that initially specialized in folk songbooks. Wise was encouraged to take up a camera by the late David Gahr, one of Oak's regular freelance photographers. As *The New York Times* noted, Gahr, who died in 2008, became one of "the pre-eminent photographers of American folk, blues, jazz and rock musicians of the 1960s and beyond."

Like his inspirational mentor, Wise began attending various North American music festivals that ranged from Mariposa to the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. At the time these festivals were often laid-back affairs with no real barriers between performers and audiences. This relaxed atmosphere often allowed for direct access to the musicians and singers. And clearly, Gahr taught him well.

People You'd Like To Know is a superb retrospective collection of beautiful black and white photographs that document Wise's musical travels throughout the '60s, '70s and '80s. While the subjects include noted rock acts such as Lou Reed, Nick Lowe, Frank Zappa and Debbie Harry and jazz standard bearers such as Charles Mingus and Herbie Mann, the majority of the photos are of folk, blues and bluegrass musicians, both widely known and relatively obscure regional acts.

The subjects, many of them in their prime, include the likes of Doc Watson, Clarence (Gate-



mouth) Brown, Josh White Jr., Koko Taylor, Lonnie Johnson, Elizabeth Cotton, Professor Longhair, Johnny Shines, Jim and Jesse Reynolds, Earl Scruggs, Bruce Cockburn, Tom Paxton... There's a number of real charmers, too: a delightful candid shot of Jackson Browne at Mariposa in 1972 (there as Joni Mitchell's beau at the time); a rogue-ish portrait of Tuli Kupperberg of The Fugs; a relaxed Brownie McGhee; a menacing Booker White (again at Mariposa); a laughing Malvina Reynolds and a curiously intense shot of Quebec fiddler Simon St Pierre.

All of these vivid, compelling, never-seen-before portraits deserve universal recognition. They truly are that good.

Bob Hallett

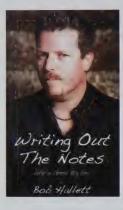
Writing Out the Notes (Insomniac Press)

Most musicians are content to let their music speak for them. Not Bob Hallett. The multi-instrumentalist with Great Big Sea puts pen to paper for Writing Out the Notes, an engaging collection of 24 tightly written essays about Hallett's own passion for music and the rocky rock he's travelled for it.

In a brisk 170 pages, Hallett pulls back the curtain on his own musical journey—from defiant proto-punk in St. John's tiny hardcore scene through a rough-and-tumble apprenticeship with pub warriors Rankin Street to finally hitting the big time with Great Big Sea.

Though he's best known for that role, sharing the stage with Alan Doyle and Sean McCann, Hallett has maintained a parallel career as a writer. These essays began as notes from the road, both to chronicle the adventure and as a release to help make sense of the craziness of life as a touring musician.

Dovetailed together in Writing



Out the Notes, Hallett's essays lay out an insightful story of a bemused musician who has faithfully followed the tug of the music playing endlessly in his head. From his earliest recollections of the mournful drone of the train whistle through his Waterford Valley neighbourhood, Hallett follows the path of music like a vein through his life.

Many of the stories turn on a particular song, a significant sonic signpost for the author. When Hallett swaps hats to become the music journalist, he offers the rare insight of a gifted musician writing about the impact of someone else's music on his life.

Whether writing about Minor Threat's Salad Days or the sublime Rattlin' Roarin Willie by the Barra MacNeils, Hallett reveals the influential music that has shaped his own creative development. Black Flag fuelled his punk period, Steeleye Span fed his emerging love for folk music and Steve Earle fired his appreciation for great songwriting.

Hallett's storytelling is certainly made the richer for the fertile material. Through all the colourful rises and tumbles in his road, music has been his constant companion and the barometer for every significant change in his life. Writing Out the Notes is an insider's diary of an inspired musician and insightful music fan.

- By Sandy MacDonald

The Night Before Christmas

By Clement C. Moore, Performed by Peter, Paul and Mary, Paintings by Eric Puybaret (Imagine! Publishing)

One of the nicer Christmas books out this season is the perennial favourite, The Night Before Christmas. First published by The New York Sentinel in 1823, this version of the poem has a distinctly folkrevival feel to it. It contains a CD with 3 tracks: the first a live 1988 rendering by Noel Paul Stookey (of the legendary folk group Peter, Paul and Mary fame) on acoustic guitar and whistling in front of an audience, the second a narrative version by Mary Travers (her final recording) with a musical background later added by Noel Paul Stookey and Matthew Quinn and, finally, a 1963 version of A' Soalin recorded by Peter, Paul and Mary. All three musical numbers have their own charms, though the childlike quality of Mary Travers' voice in the second will probably work the best for children. Another very attractive part of the package are the illustrations by Eric Puybaret (a French illustrator who did a version of their Puff The Magic Dragon in 2007), which have a slightly antique, nocturnal dream-like quality, which suits the piece very well. You can have a classic, illustrated Christmas poem for your children, or grandchildren, and maybe steer them towards the pleasures of folk music at the same time. The set is very appealing gift at a reasonable price. -

by Barry Hammond.



From Morenci Arizona where the copper mines glow I could see Clifton in the canyons below In Clifton lived Rosie we danced and we dined On the money I made in that open pit mine

How I loved my sweet Rosie and she loved me too There was nothin' for Rosie that I wouldn't do Her hugs and her kisses they were something divine Gave me reason for working that open pit mine

As I was out walking with my Rosie one day
We passed a store window with rings on display
I bought those she wanted how they really did shine
Spent the money I made in that open pit mine

Her love would bring heartbreak that I would soon learn For she would two time me when my back was turned Rosie would go dancin' and drink the red wine While I worked like a slave in that open pit mine

One night I caught Rosie and her rendezvous
She was huggin' and kissin' with somebody new
It was there that I shot her while their arms were entwined
And I buried her deep in that open pit mine

I took a look at my future and what did I see?
There was nothin' but trouble a waiting for me
But on the sun's next rising I'll be satisfied
For they'll find me there sleepin' by my sweet Rosie's side

The Scottish folksinger Dick Gaughan once said that for every thousand songwriters you needed a thousand interpreters; otherwise, when the writer of the song dies, the song dies along with them. To cultivate an interest in performers covering quality folksongs, Penguin Eggs prints a score sheet in each issue. Here we've included Ball & Chain's superb arrangement of D.T. Gentry's Open Pit Mine (initially made famous by George Jones) from their wonderful new album Louisiana Love Bug. It's available at www. ballandchain.ca. Much thanks to Jody Benjamin and Michael Ball for very kindly allowing us to print it here. And much thanks to Pat Simmonds, who deserves eternal gratitude for transcribing the music with a great deal of grace and goodwill under the pressure of deadlines.



Le Quartier Français =



Événements marquants

Pat Langston prend le temps de parler avec l'auteur-compositeur-interprète Lynn Miles des détails intimes de son nouveau disque Fall For Beauty. C'est son huitième album et notre homme considère que c'est son meilleur. Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard

ynn Miles aime regarder les hommes regarder les femmes. «J'aime les voir perdre leurs moyens quand une belle femme passe, même si ce sont des durs. Il y a quelque chose de charmant et de très romantique là-dedans, quelque chose d'humain.»

Native de Montréal et maintenant établie à Ottawa, Lynn Miles, une des meilleurs auteurs-compositeurs-interprètes du Canada, parle d'une phrase de la chanson Cracked and Broken, sur Fall For Beauty1, son huitième album et son meilleur album studio à ce jour. «Les filles tombent pour les mauvais garçons / Et les mauvais garçons tombent pour les belles filles», dit la phrase complète, un excellent rendu de ce qui est bien, ce qui est mal et ce qui restera éternellement yrai en matière d'attirance.

La vie de tous les jours, si souvent synonyme de course folle et tourmentée d'inquiétudes, se voit soudainement illuminée au contact de la beauté, une image porteuse d'espoir. Cela laisse entendre qu'il est toujours possible d'être touchés d'une manière purement sexuelle et transcendante à la fois. Cela nous rappelle que la beauté transforme la vie, ici-bas, chez les mortels. Pas mal pour quelques mots mis un à la suite de l'autre...

Bien que Miles soit une trop bonne artiste pour frapper toujours sur le même clou, elle intègre tout de même de la beauté à son album, tressée tout au travers de ses créations. (Par rapport au titre de son album et au jeu de mot qui découle du fait qu'il soit paru en octobre, elle soutient qu'elle n'avait aucune idée du moment où il paraîtrait et que le jeu de mot est purement fortuit. La beauté est bien sûr au rendez-vous dans Cracked and Broken (Brisée), qui, comme beaucoup des oeuvres de Miles, oppose le désir ardent au contentement, et contient une réflexion plutôt juste sur la vie de tous les jours.

Elle apparaît aussi dans toute sa splendeur dans la première chanson de l'album, Something Beautiful, véritable appel de clairon pour plus de grâce dans nos vies quotidiennes, de compréhension et de tout ce qui signifie «beauté», selon la définition de chacun. L'oeuvre, claire et lumineuse, impose un rythme urgent et porte la facture caractéristique de Miles, un mélange de nostalgie et de volonté de fer, transportant

le public jusqu'au refrain qui retentit avec célébration, rappelant le carillon triomphant sur l'album *Independence Day* de Martina McBride.

«C'est définitivement un hymne. Je pouvais entendre les petits enfants la chanter», nous dit-elle. «Nous vivons à une époque où on ne fait pas beaucoup attention. Voilà pourquoi ça fait du bien d'être dans une vieille bâtisse, ou dans un endroit comme la galerie d'art contemporain de Toronto, où quelqu'un a mis beaucoup de temps. On se sent mieux, on passe au niveau supérieur et on imagine un monde meilleur. On se dit : "Wow, le potentiel humain est à l'oeuvre ici!" Quand on va chez Walmart, c'est un peu le contraire qui se passe.» Mais n'allez pas penser que Lynn Miles nous fait le coup de l'optimisme béat... Oui, elle a arrêté de boire, ce qui l'a forcée à creuser plus profondément en elle-même et à l'intérieur de sa vie depuis que le bouclier de l'alcool s'est effondré.

«C'est facile de se foutre dans le pétrin avec un problème d'alcool puis d'écrire sur le sujet. Ça semble romantique et crucial, et ça l'est pendant un certain temps. J'ai simplement atteint un point où je me suis dit: "Ok, je peux continuer de faire ça ou je peux avoir une vie meilleure."» Malgré tout, Miles explique qu'elle puise sa musique dans un «profond puit de tristesse» et que son point de vue sur la vie sera toujours aigre-doux. À 52 ans, et ayant perdu son père il y a quelques années, elle est aussi plus consciente de la mortalité des êtres.

Outre le fait d'apprécier voir les durs à cuire s'amollir tel de la guimauve devant la splendeur, elle fait preuve d'une curiosité incorrigible devant l'échec, le sien ou celui des autres, et s'intéresse vivement à la remontée flamboyantes des accidentés. Parlez-lui d'un mariage qui s'effondre et, «Je suis heureuse pour eux parce que je me dis : "Ah! Maintenant tu as l'occasion de pouvoir recommencer"». Ne nous avait-elle pas dit que son point de vue était, effectivement, aigre-doux? Car après tout, que serait l'artiste sans son sens du drame?

Sa conviction que le recommencement est toujours possible est le carburant de la chanson *I Will (Je m'engage)*. Comme beaucoup d'autres chansons sur l'album majoritairement country-folk, *I Will* comporte une mélodie accessible, que l'on

Le Quartier Français

retient aussitôt. Cette originalité mélodique est le fruit des encouragements de son producteur, le guitariste lan Lefeuvre, qui est aussi son vieil ami, à explorer de nouvelles possibilités d'accords, raconte-t-elle. Miles écrivit la chanson lorsqu'elle était au bord de la faillite, sans emploi à l'horizon.

«Ça ne me dérange pas de dire au monde que j'échoue et que ça va mal parce que ça arrive à tout le monde et que je sais que je vais remonter.» Cela fait trois décennies qu'elle maintient cette confiance au sein de l'industrie de la musique. Le fait qu'elle soit toujours arrivée à payer le loyer et les comptes de téléphone, qu'importe à quel point sa situation financière était désespérée, prouve qu'elle a eu raison. «L'autonomie, ajoute-t-elle, est la paye de la frugalité et du fait de croire en soi.»

La chanson est aussi ancrée dans le désir d'éloigner la négativité qui nous entoure, engendrée par les couvertures médiatiques 24h sur 24 et les paroles déprimantes des oiseaux de mauvaise augure.

Miles ajoute qu'elle a été très inspirée par le dernier livre de Jeremy Rifkin, La Civilisation empathique –Vers une conscience globale dans un monde en crise (a). «L'idée insistante de Rifkin selon laquelle le seul moyen de contrer la catastrophe climatique est l'émergence d'une nouvelle conscience, globale et empathique, peut prendre forme de manière subtile mais significative», affirme Miles.

Sa mère, par exemple, tricote de petites fleurs de cotton dans l'autobus et sans être vue, les laisse tomber dans les bourses et les sacs des autres passagers. C'est un bien petit détail, admettons-le, mais qui connecte les gens par la gentillesse; un autre exemple qui montre à quel point la vie est belle, explique Miles.

Je ne sais pas d'où vient le gène d'empathie de Miles, mais je sais qu'il est puissant. Il transparaît particulièrement dans *Little Bird*, un amalgame de personnes qu'elle a découvertes quand elle a lu *Le Royaume des fantômes affamés : Rencontre avec la dépendance* (5), le livre du Dr Gabor Maté portant sur son travail avec les toxicomanes de Vancouver.

Son profond puit de compassion a aussi donné naissance à *Love Doesn't Hurt* (*L'amour ne blesse pas*). Elle a écrit la ballade après avoir entendu Oprah Winfrey répéter encore et encore que «l'amour ne blesse pas», suite aux révélations selon lesquelles la chanteuse pop Rihanna avait été battue par son chum. Évocatrice par ses arrangements acoustiques discrets, la chanson nous rappelle que même si l'amour peut laisser des cicatrices émotionnelles, blesser physiquement est quelque chose de bien différent. (La chanson de Miles fait clairement référence à Love Hurts, ballade qui fut d'abord enregistrée par les Everly Brothers dans les années 60). «L'amour ne laisse pas de marques sur toi, l'amour ne te laisse pas noire et bleue», chante Miles. À l'écoute de cette chanson, on se sent bien honteux en tant qu'homme, même si l'on n'a jamais même pensé à faire du mal à une femme.

Miles dit qu'elle veut chanter la chanson à l'émission d'Oprah. «Je travaille là-dessus. J'aimerais jouer cette chanson pour elle et donner l'argent des téléchargements aux organismes qui viennent en aide aux femmes. De plus, j'aimerais emmener ma mère à Chicago et passer du bon temps avec elle. Cette chanson-là, vraiment, donne raison à Oprah: L'amour ne blesse pas, l'amour ne blesse pas.»

1 Dans Fall For Beauty, fall peut signifier tomber en amour aussi bien

2 The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis, traduction française à paraître

3. In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction, ressource en anglais

Éloges

Finest Kind a passé des mois à arranger les harmonies sur leur sublime nouveaux disque, For Honour And For Gain. «On vote pour chaque note», expliquent-ils à Pat Langston. Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard

helley Posen m'invite : «Viens ici, on va te montrer ce qu'on veut dire.» Il vient juste de m'expliquer la manière dont lui et les deux autres membres de Finest Kind s'y prennent pour faire l'arrangement d'une chanson. Posen chante une note, Ian Robb embarque sur sa ligne de basse, et Ann Downey décrit des cercles au-dessus d'eux deux. Soudain leurs mains battent l'air comme des becs d'oie, s'indiquant visuellement quel sera la position de leur voix. Notre coin du café devient silencieux tandis que la foule du samedi après-midi tend l'oreille vers ce spectacle impromptu et riche où l'a capella domine. La courte démonstration terminée, le public applaudit et Posen plaisante de sa voix forte : «Repos! Merci! On a des CD à vendre à l'avant.»

Ce fragment musical illustre ce que le groupe d'Ottawa fait le mieux : des harmonies serrées et ensorcelantes, d'une qualité de précision proche de l'obsession, dont le son est néanmoins spontané et naturel. Cela



Le Quartier Français =

peut prendre des mois au trio — dont le principe est «on vote pour chaque note» — pour faire l'arrangement d'une chanson, en y travaillant quelques heures à la fois. «On ne dit jamais : "C'est correct de même, c'est assez bon"», rapporte Downey. «On a besoin de temps avec la chanson», ajoute Robb, qui a gardé son accent londonien malgré le fait qu'il ait immigré au Canada il y a 40 ans. «Il faut se demander si ce qu'on a imposé à une chanson s'accorde avec la nature de la chanson elle-même. Il faut prendre du recul et être l'auditoire.»

Ce processus minutieux et réfléchi a donné naissance à la jouissance audio qu'est For Honour & for Gain (Pour l'honneur et pour le profit). Mi-a capella, mi-accompagné, le disque est le dernier des cinq albums enregistrés par le trio depuis sa formation il y a 20 ans. (Extraits et CD disponibles sur Fallen Angle Music au www.ianrobb.com.) L'un de ces cinq albums, en passant, a été enregistré avec l'acteur canadien John D. Huston. Suivant la tradition de Finest Kind. ce nouvel album mélange les genres : vieilles ballades et classiques country, chansons contestataires et parodies, ainsi qu'un nouveau chant de Noël comportant des écarts.

À la question «quelle chanson a pris le plus de travail?», Robb répondit Thomas and Nancy. Bien que l'on se soit éloignés du sujet avant de discuter pleinement des difficultés rencontrées, Ann Downey a signalé que la chanson d'amour traditionnelle demeurait un défi majeur du point de vue harmonique. «Je suis toujours attiré d'abord par la mélodie, comme c'est le cas pour cette chanson», dit Ian Robb. «Après, j'espère simplement que les paroles soient bonnes.» Le fait que Robb parle de mélodie ouvrit la porte à des opinions nuancées à savoir si l'adhérence stricte à la mélodie traditionnelle d'une chanson était une règle sacrée pour Finest Kind.

Robb, un homme persistent et calme qui, avant de prendre sa retraite, gagnait sa vie en tant que technicien de laboratoire dans un hôpital, dit qu'il a, à l'occasion, remanié des mélodies. Posen, né à Toronto et spécialiste du folklore au Musée canadien des civilisations, après avoir établie la sacrosainte règle avec une assurance coutumière, concède que le trio est peut-être moins rigide sur le sujet qu'au début. Downey, une bassiste en demande qui a passé une partie de sa jeunesse au Texas et au

Nouveau Mexique, où la culture musicale est solide, finit par trancher: «Par respect pour l'intégrité de la chanson, il ne faut pas changer la mélodie. Toutefois, le changement fait aussi partie du processus folk.»

Nous sommes en présence d'opinions vigoureuses et d'une volonté d'atteindre le consensus, qui, soupçonne-t-on, ont contribué à garder le trio énergique et uni depuis sa formation. C'est suite à un cercle de chant qu'ils et elle se sont retrouvés assis autour d'une même table. Chacun avait déjà joué l'un avec l'autre et la chance fit en sorte qu'ils eurent envie de chanter un petit quelque chose ensemble ce soir-là. L'expérience éveilla leur ouïe.

«On s'est dit qu'on devrait se revoir et rechanter ensemble», se rappelle Posen.
«Le lendemain, Ian a appelé et a dit: "Essayons." Trouver des voix qui se mélangent comme les nôtres, ça n'arrive qu'une fois ou deux fois dans une vie.»

Depuis ce jour, les trois protagonistes ont participé à des festivals folk et ont donné des concerts des deux côtés de la frontière ainsi qu'en Angleterre. Ils se sont fait des fans dévoués, comme on pouvait s'y attendre avec un groupe aussi excellent, tellement différent de la procession lassante des auteurs-compositeurs-interprètes ordinaires. Chacun a continué à explorer avec enthousiasme d'autres avenues musicales.

Ian Robb, en plus d'être un chanteur célèbre de chansons traditionnelles, joue du concertina et est l'un des membres fondateurs de Friends of Fiddler's Green, un groupe de musique folk de Toronto qui existe depuis plusieurs décennies. Il est aussi compositeur (l'hymne de pub *The Old Rose and Crown* vient en tête) et récipiendaire d'un Prix de musique folk canadienne pour meilleur chanteur traditionnel, grâce à son travail au sein du groupe d'Ottawa, Jiig.

Ann Downey, bavarde et débordante d'énergie, participe à de nombreuses activités musicales. Elle qui s'estime chanceuse d'avoir pu rester à la maison en tant que maman travaille avec une demi-douzaine de groupes, dont quelques concoctions jazz non officielles et le groupe de Sneezy Waters. Elle joue également de la guitare et du banjo, et est, avec Robb, membre du groupe de contredanse The Old Sod Band.

Shelley Posen, détenteur d'un doctorat en folklore, joue de multiples instruments, écrit des chansons (*No More Fish, No Fishermen*

fut chanté et enregistré par des gens comme Gordon Bok) et a enregistré des albums solo. Il a donné des cours de chant utilisant les notes à forme géométriques, a dirigé des choeurs et c'est lui qui a commencé la tradition des chants de Noël dans les pubs à Ottawa.

Ce trop-plein de connaissances musicales bouillonne et déborde de leur dernier album. Une minute, le trio chante Tenting on the Old Camp Ground, une chanson populaire lors de la guerre de Sécession et la minute d'après, ils enchaînent avec une reprise de Dickey Lee, She Thinks I Still Care (Elle pense que ça me dérange), interprétant le classique country de manière enjouée, soulignant l'ironie dans cette histoire de peine de coeur.

«On chante des chansons country qui ne sonnent pas country et des chansons folk anglaises qui ne sonnent pas comme des chansons folk anglaises», dit Posen. «Parfois des gens s'opposent, mais on chante comme on veut.»

Plus loin, le trio exécute une reprise de Farm! Farm!, une chanson cynique de style music-hall portant sur les fermes de Saskatchewan, rehaussée par la touche de Gilbert et Sullivan et par un accompagnement au piano sensationnel par Jeff McClintock.

Robb ou Posen mène le bal dans la plupart des chansons, bien que Downey, s'accompagnant au banjo, prend en charge le classique appalachien au titre évocateur Short Life of Trouble (Courte vie de problèmes).

Quand on leur demande ce qui est important pour eux dans ces chansons, tous répondent différemment. Nous n'en attendions pas moins de ces trois personnes indépendantes, qui semblent toutefois soudées par le même amour de la musique.

«On enregistre pour chanter, pas pour préserver des chansons», répond Posen. «Les gens n'apprennent pas de chanson souvelles en les chantant dans les fêtes comme c'était le cas avant. C'est certainement une des raisons qui me pousse à chanter : pour que les gens entendent ces chansons et puissent les apprendre», renchérit Robb. «Je suis dans ce projet pour les harmonies et pour chanter», dit Downey. «Je suis persuadée que quelque chose de physique se produit dans les ondes cérébrales quand les gens chantent ensemble comme ça.»

La fée des dents

André Brunet



La première pièce me vient du tout nouveau disque «les habits de papier» de l'excellent trio De Temps Antan. La seconde partition est une composition bien connue du violoneux Joseph Bouchard. J'ai reproduit ici la manière précise avec laquelle il jouait la pièce: attention il manque quelques temps ici et là!

The first piece is from the excellent Québécois trio De Temps Antan. It is one of the new tunes on their latest CD: «les habits de papier». The second tune is very well known the world over. It is a composition by the fiddler Joseph Bouchard. This version is the actual way Jos recorded it with a few missing beats.

Reel de Pointe-au-Pic

Pascal Gemme

The Opinion Page



les semieniuk is the veteran general manager of the Calgary Folk Music Festival. Here he responds to the previous opinion piece published on this page, which criticized folk festival artistic directors for their increasing use of pop bands.

Mitch Podolak's missive in the last issue of *Penguin Eggs* raises questions that board members and organizers in this important cultural industry should be asking themselves every year after their particular event.

Mainly his broadside raises that age-old conundrum: what is folk music? It's a question that has been debated for donkey's years. We who arrange these events should constantly be continuing that discussion. But we're also the only ones who should worry about it. The audience and the rest of the world doesn't agonize over whether it's folk music or not—nor should they.

Folk festivals in Canada have always been less dogmatic in their definitions of folk music, and welcome and include musical strays that don't seem to fit anywhere else. Folk music is a living, breathing, everchanging entity, and as time marches on choices of instruments and musical styles are ever evolving. Mr. Podolak states that 90 per cent of music is folk music and the rest is influenced by it. That's a pretty good

base of music to draw from.

That raises and brings to the forefront the major "problem" with folk festivals—their eclectic nature. Most large festivals hire 50 to 75 acts. If they try to fulfil all the needs and wants of the blues, bluegrass, Celtic, singer-songwriter, acoustic, traditional, Quebecois, First Nations (both trad and contemporary), indie, roots, alt-country, gospel, Cajun, Maritime, local, national and international communities, there'd be one act for each of them every year.

It's a tough challenge for artistic directors to program an event with an audience of individuals as diverse as the music they have to choose from. You can't please everyone every time and choices of balance or not have to be made on a yearly basis. The sheer number of folk festivals in Canada guarantees varied approaches to this problem. Some are more traditional than others, some have more world music than others, some are more headliner oriented than others, but all are still identifiable as folk festivals.

Also, if you look at a particular festival as a whole artistic entity rather than just a sum of it's various stylistic parts, you'll realize some of the booking decisions are also made for many other reasons—tangible and intangible. Reasons such as the musical skill level of the performer, their ability to play well with others, their artistic and cultural merit, and the peculiarities and wants of the local audience—some acts fare better in front of certain audiences than others. And yes, that might even include their box office draw or doing an agent who's been co-operative a favour.

If some inappropriate performers are hired—sometimes—so what! The only way you can be sure you've found your musical boundaries is by crossing them. Although seemingly well established, most Canadian folk festivals are still works in progress. And us old guys haven't seen anything yet.

Mr. Podolak got his first job as an artistic director by starting a festival. Those days are mostly gone and all artistic directors have gone through some sort of screening process to get his or her job. Is that process good enough? Well, every board or organization that hires or appoints volunteers to that position has to go through that soul searching. And most do. If they entrust the wrong person to articulate their particular

festival's vision, it usually is soon corrected.

Artistic directors, though, should be able to answer Mr. Podolak's most valid core question: "When was the last time you heard a sea shanty?" (For me, last year in Calgary and this year in Edmonton.) But if that answer is, in your neck of the woods, not lately, the reason could also well lie in the fact that there are not as many practitioners of the traditional sea shanty as there once were. Even folk music has cycles—remember the Celtic scare of the late '90s in Canada. It was mainstream, it was popular, and it was lucrative. Now, not so popular, not so lucrative and not so mainstream.

Yet Celtic music survives quite nicely as folk festivals are not the be all and end all for keeping traditions alive. I live in a city with six successful and functioning folk clubs plus commercial venues catering to live music, and if some style of folk music is given short shrift in any given year, at the annual festival it always has a home and an audience.

I would also like raise the point that folk festivals are folk festivals, not only by the type of music they offer but by the type of ethics, values and collaborative structures they embrace that sets them aside from rock, jazz and other music festivals. Folk festivals should always be judged not just on style of music but also their way of going about their business. That is fraught with its own perils and pitfalls and also engenders never-ending debate. Which is as it should be.

Mr. Podolak has seen an idea that he had, almost 40 years ago, blossom and spread across this country—even beyond his wildest dreams. We, who earn a living because of these amazing organizations, welcome constructive criticism and expect to be held accountable for our efforts during our tenure as custodians of the vision. We owe our jobs to him and all those who came before us.

Thanks for restarting the conversation, Mr. Podolak. Folk is a process. It's been going on a long time. Stop worrying. I personally think folk music, Canadian folk clubs and folk festivals, no matter how you define them or want them to be, are in safe, custodial and loving—but certainly not perfect—hands.

january

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TRUDEAU STORIES
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\$20 students/seniors

RAMBLERS \$28

20 SUN

25 FRI

april

15 FRI

march



WED

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